

Stephan Guth

Emerging Subjectivity in the Long 19th-Century Middle East

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Stephan Guth

Emerging Subjectivity in the Long 19th- Century Middle East



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Introduction

Scholarly interest in what is usually called the Arab(ic) Nahḍa is certainly not new. While it had long been treated as the period of transition from an ‘age of decay (*inḥiṭāṭ*)’ to that of enlightened, secular, western-style modernity – a transition seen teleologically as a process of ‘maturation’ after an initial ‘infancy’ – Postcolonial Studies in the wake of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) have triggered a revision and re-evaluation which continue to this day. They comprise a broadening of the textual basis on which historical research about the period is building as well as the addition of new aspects looked into and theoretical-methodological approaches applied to the material. Ever since the late twentieth century, the amount of new research has increased to the degree that one has by now come to speak of Nahḍa Studies as a field of research in its own right within studies of the modern Middle East. In their ‘update’ on Albert Hourani’s seminal *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (1962), Jens Hanssen and Max Weiß rightly spoke of an emerging field that has gained new interest from many sides, both in its own right and as part of global intellectual history (Hanssen and Weiß 2016, xix). To summarise the state of affairs in this “dynamic burgeoning field” (Sheehi 2012, 269), it is as convenient as worthwhile to quote at some length the opening paragraphs of Dyala Hamza’s fine chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Middle Eastern and North African History*, due to its conciseness and (near-)comprehensiveness:

An Arab cultural movement born during the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire but with premodern roots, the Nahḍa¹ simultaneously flourished and was tethered under colonial and autocratic rule before being phased out, or appropriated, by diverse nation-state projects between the 1920s and 1950s. Brought forth by a dynamic prenatal public sphere centered around Beirut, Alexandria, and Cairo, radiating out to other provincial capitals and city ports in the Mashriq and the Maghrib, the Nahḍa was traversed by competing narratives and ideologies that all shared the mantra of reform (*islāḥ*) [*author’s note*: A ubiquitous term, *islāḥ* pervades the literature of the Nahḍa in ways technical and less so and with the definite incantational quality of a mantra.² (...)]. Through newspapers and journals, publishing houses and bookshops, cafés and salons, local and global societies and diasporic networks, the Nahḍa engineered a modern political sensibility that left the post-

¹ Transliteration added throughout the quotation – S.G.

² Reference to Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020).

Ottoman citizen with spaces of experience and horizons of expectation uneasily contained in the new world of nation-states.

This understanding of the Nahḍa is new. In the past fifteen years [i.e., since 2005], the Nahḍa as an object of study has morphed from a site of derivative and defensive modernity, into a complex process of cultural “rising” (the literal meaning of *n-h-ḍ*)—partly an engagement with late European imperialism but also partly “autogenetic” [note: The first to draw attention to an organic drive for reforms from within Nahḍa studies is Sheehi (2004), a critical field which he is credited to have launched. A much earlier attempt, one that saw “Islamic roots of capitalism”, was Gran (1979), a path followed by only a handful of scholars (Voll 1983, 1999; Schulze 1990, 1996), probably on account of their espousal of the “Enlightenment” thesis—a thesis energetically disavowed (...)].³ A new generation of social and intellectual historians of the Middle East and North Africa, steeped in Edward Said’s critique of Orientalism, critiqued Albert Hourani’s 1962 *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age (1798–1939)*. Drawing on postcolonial studies, critical theory, social network analysis, comparative literature, translation studies, and discourse analysis [and one should probably add: conceptual history – S.G.], recent scholars ask new questions [...]. Adopting a creative approach to historical sources, they lead us away from the “coming of the West” paradigm and its attendant modernization theory and spatial and chronological framings. The gendering of the Nahḍa, an attention to the subaltern, as well as a return to political economy and material culture have shifted the focus toward the non-canonical, the “unschooled literates”, the popular, the domestic, and even the “non-modern.” This scholarship has highlighted the contradictions contained in the Nahḍawi public sphere, a site of hegemonic and dissenting discourses, publics and counter-publics. New work in Ottoman studies has also contributed to this shift.

(Hamzah 2020, 39–40)

Hamzah concludes his overview with a mapping of future tasks, stating that, “[t]hus we seem poised to reconsider the hegemonic reforms and discourses of the Nahḍa in light of its transnational magnitude, internal dynamics, and polyphonic scripts” and, given the huge amount of new research and findings, “there remains a discrepancy between the scholarly output concerned with ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ reformist discourse and practice. In addition, an integrated comparative analysis across these categories has yet to happen” (ibid., 41), and this

3 The full bibliographical data of the author-year references given here are: Stephen Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004); Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840* (Austin: Texas University Press, 1979); John O. Voll, “Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: Tajdid and Islah”, in John L. Esposito (ed.), *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 32–47; id., “Foundations for Renewal and Reform: Islamic Movements in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries”, in John L. Esposito (ed.), *The Oxford History of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 509–548; Reinhard Schulze, “Das islamische achtzehnte Jahrhundert: Versuch einer historiographischen Kritik”, *Die Welt des Islams* 30 (1990): 140–159; and id., “Was ist die islamische Aufklärung?” *Die Welt des Islams* 36.3 (1996): 276–325.

should include an attempt to “contemplate a counter-Nahḍa that would accommodate Nahḍa’s ‘others’” (ibid., 42). As also research on the seventeenth and eighteenth century has yielded new results, Hamzah further postulates to revise our view on the Nahḍa and the ‘long nineteenth century’ in the light of (a) “The Intellectual Flowering of the Seventeenth Century”, (b) “Independent Reasoning (*ijtihād*), ‘Nouveau Literacy,’ and the Scripturalist Legacy of Wahhabism”, (c) “Inflections Within the Islamic Sciences: Logic vs. *Ḥadīth*”, and (d) “Changes in Pedagogy, Legal Practice, and Canon” (headings in Hamzah 2020, 47–49).

Despite the importance of the above lacunae, which Hamzah without doubt identified correctly and with full right, the present book makes no effort to address any of them because I think there is still enough to do with ‘traditional’ material. The present book therefore prefers to stay within the Nahḍa ‘proper’ and go more in-depth there, hoping to reach the deeper level of some very essentials instead by bundling philological approaches from several distinct directions under the heading of ‘emerging subjectivity’. This will be achieved by adding some aspects that have been overlooked (or only marginally mentioned) by Hamzah. The reader will note six major features that characterises the book’s way to approach the topic of ‘emerging subjectivity’:

- While much current research displays increased interest in material aspects (and ‘materialistic’ readings) of the Nahḍa, my approach remains largely philological (language and literature), seeking to prove the continued relevance and high potential of linguistic and narratological analysis for the discovery of deeper structures. These approaches may seem slightly ‘old-fashioned’ to some, but I hope to be able to build bridges between them (and this means also precious earlier philological research and findings, often available only in other languages than English) and the more recent and ‘fashionable’ ones (predominantly Anglophone). It is for this reason that I also included some of my own studies from the 1990s and earlier 2000s, some of them originally published in German, all drawing on older Nahḍa-related research, stemming from a time when Nahḍa Studies had not emerged as a field in its own right yet.
- This implies an attempt to strengthen the ties between literary and non-literary historical studies, as well as between linguistic, grammar-oriented approaches (cf. Chapter 3), conceptual history (cf. Chapters 4, 5, 7), and cultural epistemology (which we may well take as the ultimate goal of Nahḍa Studies in general and where my contribution is eager to emphasize the ‘subjectivist turn’, with its many facets).

- Moreover, the book seeks to make available earlier own fiction-based explorations into Nahḍa emotionalism (esp. Chapters 10, 11 and 15) for contemporary Nahḍa Studies, which have only recently (after Margrit Pernau’s pioneering studies and the emergence of research fields like the History of Emotions) begun to become aware of the importance of the emotional dimensions of cultural change (although an interest in psychology and anthropological questions had, in principle, always been there since the postcolonial turn, which had highlighted, among many other aspects, also the impact of colonialism on the colonised’s psyche).
- During the work on my postdoctoral thesis – a comparative history of the Arabic and Turkish novel (Guth2023b) – I learned to appreciate the heuristic benefit that can be drawn from juxtaposing the findings of one research field with those of another, both with their own peculiar approaches and research traditions. As I have the impression that there is still little dialogue between Nahḍa Studies and studies of the Tanẓīmāt and early Republican period although it is obvious (and acknowledged from both sides) that both have much in common, I included in this book a section on “Turkish Parallels” (Part VII) and several chapters in which I point to similar phenomena in Turkish.
- Ever since my studies of the Arabic and Turkish novel had alerted me to the existence of so many parallels between the Arabophone and Turcophone spheres I have also dealt with the question of how these parallels can be explained. During the nineteenth century, there was, of course, still much direct contact and exchange between intellectuals from both regions and language communities. However, each of them was also – and often independently from each other – under the influence of ‘global’ discourses of ‘modernisation’, ‘reform’, ‘progress’, etc. A method of literary analysis with which I became acquainted during the work on my thesis and which has been helpful ever since, is Component Analysis as developed by the late Walter Falk, a former professor of German literature at the University of Marburg, Germany. I will use this method every now and then in the present book (see esp. Chapters 2 and 18) because I think the approach can shed new light on many phenomena from the period and help to start developing an internal periodisation that general terms like ‘modernity’ are too unspecific to provide. Moreover, Falk’s approach can contribute criteria that may be beneficial in addressing the question of the interplay between ‘global’ modernity and ‘local’ specifications, i.e., in dealing with the ‘multilingualism’ of modernity.

- Last but not least: In Part VI, the book widens the temporal perspective by going beyond the Nahḍa (and corresponding Turkish phenomena) and following up on the ‘Nahḍa project’ by looking into twentieth-century developments.

The contributions in the volume are arranged roughly chronologically (not by the time of their earlier publication but proceeding from the early Nahḍa to its later phases).

Parts I and II are of a general nature. While the former has a brief look at Arab-Ottoman relations (Chapter I-1) and the theoretical framing concerning periodisation (Chapter I-2), the latter deals with the more strictly linguistic phenomena (Chapter II-3). Parts III–VI form constitute the volume’s main body. They focus, respectively, on the early beginnings (Part III, with an emphasis on genre transitions and, with these, on changes in the perception, ‘processing,’ and presentation of the world), the question of emerging subjectivity, especially of the new bourgeoisie or middle class, the *efendiyya* group (Part IV), and the Nahḍa at its enthusiastic height (Part V, on early optimistic nationalism). Part VI maintains the central section’s chronological approach, but differs from the preceding three parts insofar as it tries to cover the period as a whole (or even go beyond it) rather than to deal with the issues peculiar to individual subperiods. The volume’s last section (Part VII) consists of a brief excursion beyond the Arab setting into some Turkish key texts from the same period.

The whole volume takes a basic knowledge about the most general framing – political, economic, historical, colonial or quasi-colonial – as given. Therefore none of the chapters of Part I makes any endeavour to re-tell, for the umpteenth time, the story of increasing European influence, the advent of Napoleon, the beginnings of the Tanzimat and the reasons for the introduction of large-scale reforms under the Egyptian Muḥammad ‘Alī and his successors, the study missions to Europe, the impact of the introduction of the printing press, the first ‘civil war’ in Lebanon, the British occupation of Egypt, growing nationalism in the provinces, the gradual collapse of the old Ottoman Empire, the First World War and, in its aftermath, the emergence of the first nation states, the turbulent interwar period which, however, was to bring a kind of ‘culmination’, but also a sobering-up or even disillusionment for the reformist-nationalist drive. For this type of background information, as also for the development of religious and political thought, the reader is kindly asked to refer to already extant seminal studies, like Albert Hourani’s *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798 to 1939* (1962), or Stephen Sheehi’s *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (2004), Jens Hanssen and Max Weiß’s *Arabic Thought Beyond the Liberal Age* (ed., 2016), or Florian Zemmin’s *Modernity in*

Islamic Tradition (2018), to mention only a few. As for general overviews of the literary history of the period, conform Roger Allen's and my own entries (on "Fiction, Arabic" and "Novel, Arabic", respectively) in the *Encyclopædia of Islam THREE*, the brief entry "Fiction, modern" (by Walid Hamarneh) in Paul Starkey's and Julie Scott Meisami's *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (1998) or, in more detail, Volume I of the French *Histoire de la littérature arabe moderne (1850–1945)*, edited by Boutros Hallaq and Heidi Toelle (2007), as well as, for fine analyses of the Arabs' encounter with the West as portrayed in belletristic texts, the two standard monographs on the topic: Rotraud Wielandt's extensive *Das Bild der Europäer in der arabischen Erzähl- und Theaterliteratur* (1982) and the somewhat broader, but also less in-depth *Arab Perspectives of the Occident* by Rasheed El-Enany (2006).

Instead of a repeated description of all these phenomena, Part I chooses to add two perspectives that, in our view, have not received due attention yet, although they no doubt substantially complement the picture. One of these perspectives (Chapter I-1) is concerned with the Arabs' relation to the Sublime Porte and its representatives in the Arab Ottoman provinces as an essential aspect of the political constellation that, like the other aspects mentioned above, framed the manifold processes going on in the period in question. The chapter shows the importance of the Ottomans as a third element, with several functions for the Arabs in their meeting with Europeans and European-style modernity. It also raises the question of internal periodisation of the *Nahḍa*, which subsequent chapters will come back to on several occasions, sometimes as a side aspect, but often with a special focus. The question is central to Chapter I-2, for instance, which seeks to contribute a meta-perspective that, even after the rise of Postcolonial Studies and its thorough questioning of Eurocentrism, still remains to be followed up: Instead of approaching Middle Eastern history, and with it the *Nahḍa*, as an 'Other' with its own temporality, insinuating a lagging behind of Middle Eastern ('Oriental') as compared to Western modernities, the chapter underlines the commonalities in Middle Eastern (here especially Arab) and European attitudes towards 'the world', commonalities that tend to be overlooked or neglected because of differences in appearance, though they certainly *were* there, as the world had since long become a 'globalized' world. Had it not been for such a fundamental agreement on the essential structures of 'meaning' in and of the world, communication and exchange across the 'modernities' would never have been possible.

Agreement on very basic structures of meaning notwithstanding, there *were*, however, of course, differences. And they were so big that it seems to be justified, on the other hand, to a certain degree and in some respects, to periodise Middle

Eastern cultural history also in a way that is quite different from contemporaneous western cultural history.

One – or perhaps *the* – keyword in this respect is certainly *subjectivity*, as a new factor governing human beings' attitude towards the world. The split, so characteristic of Modernity, between the human subject and the world as its object began to mark European civilisation from the era of the Renaissance onwards and found its major expressions in the philosophies of Descartes (in whose *cogito ergo sum* the perception of the world is made contingent on the human ego) or Kant (with his focus on the agency of human reason, the *Vernunft*, that, too, deals with the world as its object), as well as in Romanticism (where the centrality of the human subject culminated in, among other things, the cult of the genius or the virtuoso). The rise of new literary genres, first of all the novel, and the novel of formation of the self in particular, were other reflexes of the increased centrality of the human subject, as were also travel accounts, real or fictional, in which the new self-conscious and self-confident subjects cast their ideas about the world they explored as their object. Most of these and many other processes accompanying the emergence of a new subjectivity can certainly not be observed in the Middle East on a large-scale basis earlier than in the *Nahḍa*. A clear indicator of this is the language of the *Nahḍa* itself – the topic of our Part II = Chapter 3). Massive linguistic changes do not occur before the 19th century. While the lexical innovation and stylistic changes that led to the emergence of what we now are used to call Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) have been addressed already by several highly valuable studies,⁴ little attention has been paid so far to the psychological-epistemological foundations of the morpho-semantics that were operative in the coining of modern terminology and the expression of the subject's agency in the world. Chapter II-3 tries to fill this gap by combining observations about the grammar of the modernising language with hypotheses about the origin of the described features in the language users' changed attitude towards the world. The chapter sees phenomena such as the increased occurrence of derivations showing the (self-referential) *t*-morpheme, the many abstract coinings in *-iyya* or the causative verb forms II (*FaʿʿaLa*) and IV (*ʿaFʿaLa*) as reflections of that emerging subjectivity.

⁴ Cf., among many others, especially Vincent Monteil's *L'Arabe moderne* (1960), Jaroslav Stetkevych's *The Modern Arabic Literary Language* (1970), Helga Rebhan's *Geschichte und Funktion einiger politischer Termini...* (1986), Ami Ayalon's *Language and Change in the Arab Middle East* (1987), Bernard Lewis's *The Political Language of Islam* (1988), Kees Versteegh's *The Arabic Language* (1997), Adrian Gully's "Arabic Linguistic Issues and Controversies..." (1997), M. Sawā'ī/Sawaie's *Azmat al-muṣṭalaḥ al-ʿarabī ... = La crise de la terminologie arabe au XIX^e siècle...* (1999), and Christian Junge's *Die Entblößung der Wörter* (2019a).

As a chapter concerned with language, the medium through which the whole era articulates itself in all its various fields and its multiple forms of expression, Chapter II-3 forms a section in its own right reflections of which will be felt in all of the following sections. This is particularly true for Part III with its focus on conceptual change and the processes at work during a period of transition from “old” (inherited, traditional) to “new”, “modern”. All four contributions in this part deal with the way in which the old concept of *adab* is integrated, gradually, into a changing worldview and how, in this process, new Western concepts, like “literature” (Chapter III-4), “novel” (Chapter III-7), or “nation” (Chapter III-5) in turn are ‘*adab*-ted’, i.e., modified to fit into an autochthonous tradition, producing a specifically Arab/ic⁵ type of modernity.

Chapter III-6 with its focus on the agents behind the introduction of new genres could have been placed as well in Part IV which seeks to highlight exactly the human beings who have just begun to gain self-awareness and the self-confidence as agents disposing of the power of dealing with the world as their object. However, while Chapter III-6 is more interested in the challenges of integrating key features of a new concept – the “plot” of a fictional narrative in this case – the chapters of Part IV mainly draw attention to major *external* ‘markers’ of the new types of narratives that express the Nahḍa worldview, like a strengthening of the narrative subject in the neo-*maqāma* (Chapter IV-8), the emotionalisation of the narrative discourse (Chapters IV-9 and IV-11) and its moralisation (Chapters IV-10 and IV-11), an aspect already dealt with in Chapter III-4 (under the perspective of ‘*adab*-tation’ that time).

Emotionalisation, in particular, with excessive lachrymosity as a major characteristic especially of pre-WW I until the 1920s, points already to the next section, Part V, which deals with the period when the Nahḍa, at its zenith, has become almost synonymous with nation-building. Chapter V-12 analyzes an important manifesto of *adab qawmī*, “national literature”. The text gives deep insight into the objectives of the movement and the ideas and ideologies it builds on. Chapter V-13 then presents the literary biography of one of the key exponents of this “national literature” as an exemplary life trajectory of one of the prominent adherents of the *adab qawmī* idea, Maḥmūd Taymūr, often called the ‘father’ of the Egyptian short story. It is meant to convey an idea of how the Nahḍa sensibility and worldview translated into the life and work of a highly prolific member of the *Madrasa ḥadītha*, the “Modernist School” who, at the “heyday” of the Nahḍa, were key promoters of *adab qawmī* ideology and, with it, “highbrow” Egyptian

5 The slash in the adjective “Arab/ic” is meant to give credit to the fact that the agents are, of course, *Arabs* while the language in which this modernity is expressed, is *Arabic*.

nationalism. Chapter V-14 reconnects to the question, raised in Chapter I-2, of the simultaneity of the (seemingly) non-simultaneous, juxtaposing an exemplary short story by a representative of “national literature” with features of simultaneous non-Arab/ic worldviews, with the aim of highlighting comparability with simultaneous developments in Europe, and thus shared ‘modernity’, in a global perspective, despite very different appearances on the surface.

As mentioned above, Part VI takes a look at the *Nahḍa* and the concomitant ‘upswing’ of the subject-agent as a whole, attempting a summarising view of, roughly, a century of historical developments with the aim of highlighting the major threads. It does so in two sub-chapters. Chapter VI-16 follows the idea of the “independent self” from the mid-19th century (when it, to our best knowledge, was first mentioned as such in an Arabic novel of 1859), through many ups and downs, and via its deep crisis in the 1960s, until its (seeming) dissolution in Orhan Pamuk’s postmodern novels and their idea of East and West as twins, or two faces of the same coin, or the “palimpsest” nature of any self, as well as the mutual reflexivity, interdependence and complementarity of what until then had formed a grand narrative of modernity, i.e., the essential difference of “Eastern” and “Western” cultural identities (and degrees of civilisation on the well-known teleological scale of modernist ideology, spanning from “underdevelopment” to “developedness”, from “backwardness” to “progressiveness”, etc.). In addition to that, Chapter VI-17 demonstrates that modernist thought in the Middle East, with its constant hope to be able to achieve a better future, has always had a utopian dimension and that the development of utopian thinking since the *Nahḍa* has followed the same steps and patterns that have been described for European utopias since the Renaissance and the beginning of “Modern Times” in the West. The observations made on the historical development of the genre in Europe help us to identify similar modes and patterns of individualisation, spatialisation and temporalisation in Middle Eastern modernity, a fact that provides useful additional categories of framing for our interpretation of the macro-timespan in question.

The last part (Part VII) is intended to serve as complementary – in two respects. As it deals all with *Turkish* literature, it provides Turkologists with material that they are used to treat in the context of Turkish literary history only, while its juxtaposition to studies on *Arabic* literature will, it is hoped, allow for a wider framing. And vice versa: the addition of Turkish parallels will make clear to the Arabist that the phenomena analyzed in the preceding chapters are not at all restricted to the *Nahḍa* and the emergence of *Arabic* subjectivity and the *Arab* subject’s agency alone. Chapter VII-18 follows up on ideas of periodisation, global and regional simultaneity that have been addressed especially in chapters I-2 and

V-14, while Chapter VII-19 provides four micro-analyses of key texts from the period corresponding the Arab/ic Nahḍa, i.e., the late Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic.

Oslo, May 2023 / Tübingen, January 2024

Part I: **Background / Settings**

1 Arab perspectives on the late Ottoman Empire

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This chapter: As already made clear in the Introduction, and as the reader rightly can expect from a volume entitled *Emerging Subjectivity*..., the focus of the present collection of studies lies on processes that, for the most part, ‘take place’ *within* the minds of Middle Easterners during the so-called “long nineteenth century”. Our main interest is not in the ‘outside world’ (with its political, social, economic etc. constellations) but in the way the emerging subject meets this outside world (as its object), conceives of it, interacts with it, ‘processes’ it mentally and emotionally. Why then an opening chapter dealing, to a large extent, with the political situation and questions of national independence and belonging, a chapter that sketches the Arabs’ navigation between two ‘masters’ – the Turks on the one hand, and the West on the other – and their gradual emancipation from both, culminating in a call for national independence?

It is clear from the mode in which this navigation happens – all voices we meet in this chapter are the voices of *public intellectuals* – that most of the processes of ‘emerging subjectivity’ that the present book is about are strongly virulent, or already completed, in the protagonists who are speaking here. Listening to their voices, we are witnessing not so much cases of *emerging* subjectivity but rather of a subjectivity that *has already emerged* and is now seeking to establish and consolidate itself. The Arab intellectuals of this period clearly are aware of their distinct Arab identity and their status as political subjects, and they are clearly motivated by a sense of agency that is based on an – explicit or intuitive – feeling that any human subject should have the right to unfold in its subjectivity, with all that entails, in freedom.

The negotiation that we will observe in this chapter can show us two things. First, the emerged subjects, with their capability and desire to analyse, criticize, reorganize the world and to ‘live themselves’, are looking for the best outside conditions that allow them to do so. They are completely aware of the pros and cons of the political, social, economic, and cultural constellations and are seeking for the most favourable balance that might guarantee them both the freedom to unfold and the recognition of the identities they not only are conscious but also very proud of and want to be respected for. For a long time, the scales of this balance continue to tip in favour of what is believed to secure outward political stability, i.e., a solution under the roof of the Ottoman Empire. The sultan may be a despot,

yes; and, yes, severe censorship often restricts a free unfolding of one's identity. But still, compared to the disrespect for 'Oriental' identities that speaks out of the West's colonialist exploitative approach to the Arab countries and its quest for cultural hegemony, the old empire appears to be the better choice. – But it is, secondly, not only for fear of disrespect or loss of (territorial as well as cultural) status and integrity that the emerged Arab subjects prefer, for a long time, to remain under the Ottoman roof. It seems that the newly emerged subject also senses that its subjectivity is still somehow vulnerable, in danger of being questioned, diverted, or even corrupted if it were to leave the protecting 'home' of the familiar ancient empire and instead opened for still more, and stronger, Western influence and supremacy. The path of reform and modernisation that the newly emerged subjects were envisaging for themselves and their societies could only be followed by strong, self-confident subjects who knew exactly what they were doing and who were sure that they would stand firmly in face of possible, and expectable, challenges. Therefore, the West was better kept at a distance. It had to remain a West that one could continue to let oneself be inspired by but at the same time a West that was still far away and not powerful enough to interfere with direct normative, authoritative prescriptions into the consolidation of the still vulnerable emerged subjectivity.

Jens Hanssen speaks of the cultural anxiety of the Nahḍawī intellectual (cf., e.g., Hanssen 2006, 193, 216–217), and this anxiety – which is also the anxiety of possibly being prevented, by a too dominant West, from developing a strong, self-conscious and self-confident cultural 'personality' – was certainly among the most virulent factors that for a long time made Arabs prefer the safe haven of the old empire.

As will be evident from this chapter, too, the shifting scales of the pro vs. con balance later leaned towards independence (from both Ottomans *and* the West).

As will be evident from this chapter, the shifting scales of the pro vs. con balance later leaned towards independence (from both Ottomans and the West). This change is interpreted in the chapter as a result of growing discomfort with the old, inherited political framework. The Ottoman 'roof' was increasingly turning into a nationalistic Turkish yoke. Additionally, the colonial powers were exploiting the country, treating the local population with contempt, cruelty, and injustice. In Egypt, for instance, the Dinshawāy incident of 1906 highlighted these injustices. Furthermore, the colonial powers had begun dividing other parts of the Middle East, such as Mesopotamia and the Levant, into "spheres of influence" in an imperialistic manner. However, it is unlikely that the idea of national independence solely resulted from Turkish anti-Arab racism and British-French im-

perialism. It also gained traction due to the fact that the formerly still quite anxious emerging subject had had time, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, to consolidate itself and now acted from a stronger, more mature and courageous standpoint.

Chapter 1 thus describes the emerged subjectivity's transition from one stage to another. In Chapter 2, the first of these two stages will be equated with a global period labelled *Reproductionism* by the late Walter Falk,¹ a period roughly corresponding to what in European history usually is called *Restoration* (a term that, in my view, should be considered as an adequate rendering of the Ottoman *tanẓīmāt*²). According to Falk, in this period the human being is still unable to effect fundamental change in the world although it would often like to do so. Rather, it experiences the existing order of things as stronger and eventually remains satisfied with its re-formation, accepting it, and contenting itself with some (non-substantial, often superficial) modification. In the arts and in literature, this approach to the world is reflected in a tendency to 'realistic' representation (sometimes with some formal embellishment); in politics, one observes either restoration (acknowledging the authority of *older* laws) or progressivism (believing in the authority of *new* laws, a new order of things); in the sciences, the prototypical figure is the registering scholar, the positivist (registering old or new laws, but in any case *laws*, the laws of an *existing* order/system). The period of *Reproductionism* (ca. 1820–1880) is followed, according to Falk, by that of *Creativism* (ca. 1880–1910), a period in which the human subject still experiences the outside world as unshakeable, dead, petrified, but in which the subject's desire to change the prevalent order of things is at least capable of imagining a fundamentally new type of existence. In Falk's view, the prototype of this period is the creative artist or writer.

If Falk's description of the two stages in the development of human subjectivity during which the *Nahḍa* unfolds is meaningful, then we may perhaps say that the Arab intellectuals' hesitant sticking to the Ottoman roof roughly corresponds to Falk's *Reproductionism*, while the imagination of alternative political and social systems at a later stage could be interpreted as expression of a "Creative" mindset.

* * *

¹ Walter Falk (1924–2000), formerly professor of German Literature at Marburg University.

² Be it "reform", be it "restoration", both English terms rightly start with the *re-* prefix, as the *tanẓīmāt* aim at *re*-installing a previous "order", or "system" (*niẓām*), where also innovation ultimately is *re*-novation, *re*-ordering.

1.1 Introduction

In his little lexicon about *The Arab World*, Alexander Flores starts his entry about the role and importance of the Ottomans for this region stating that, until the end of World War I, the overwhelming majority of the Arab populations, including the elites, remained loyal subjects of the Ottoman Empire (Flores 2003, 202). Flores explains this as the result of a long history of relatively uncomplicated Ottoman-Arab relations,³ relations that had remained so uncomplicated because the Ottomans always employed non-Turkish Muslims (as well as non-Muslims) on all levels of administration and did not make, before the early twentieth century, any attempts to stress *Turkishness* as a leading ideology. In contrast to what later Arab nationalists often want to make their readers believe, Ottoman administration did, as a rule, not mean foreign oppression for the Arabs (Flores 2003, 202).⁴

Flores's general assessment is corroborated by that of several others.⁵ Yet it does not explain why the Ottoman state would issue several decrees that made everybody living under Ottoman rule into equal citizens of the state, irrespective of religious or ethnic affiliation.⁶ In 1869, the ideology – generally referred to as ‘Ottomanism’⁷ – was even translated into the Ottoman Nationality Act which made all subjects of the Empire equal before the law, after the Imperial Edict (*Ḥaṭṭ-ı Hümāyūn*) of 1856 had already granted religious freedom and the

³ The Levant had become Ottoman in 1516, Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula incl. Yemen in 1517, Iraq in 1539, Tripolitania and the Cyrenaica in 1557, Tunisia and Algeria in 1574; cf. Berger et al., eds. 1987, 44.

⁴ For some specimens of twentieth century Arab national ideology that lumped Mamluks, Ottomans and British colonizers into one category of oppressors of the past, cf. Reinkowski 2016, passim. In his *Philosophy of the Revolution* (ca. 1960), the “great leader” Gamal Abdel Nasser even quoted, approvingly, his ancestors with their saying, *yā rabb yā mutagallī*, ‘*ihlik il-‘uthmānī*’ [read ‘*uṣmallī*’, with *n > l* assimilation, for reasons of rhyme] “Oh Lord, who art manifest in Thy deeds, destroy the Ottoman(s)”; quoted in German *ibid.*, 237; Arabic original as in Gamāl ‘Abd al-Nāṣir [ca. 1960], 45; English translation following Badawi and Hinds 1986, s.r. v¹gly.

⁵ Cf., e.g., Thomas Philipp who holds that “[b]efore World War I we hear practically no Arab voice demanding Arab independence”: Philipp 2014, 115.

⁶ Cf., e.g., Shaw 1971, 24–159, 135.

⁷ Although, if Alp E. Topal is right, the corresponding Turkish term, ‘*Oṣmānhıclık*’, is not attested earlier than in 1913, one may well nevertheless speak, as historians usually do, of an ‘Ottomanist’ ideology, an Ottomanism *avant la lettre*, meaning a ‘pan-Ottoman’ ideology that sought to include all subjects of the Ottoman state as equal citizens with equal rights (e.g., religious freedom, primary education, etc.) and duties (esp. taxes and military service). Cevik refers to this very same concept as “imperial nationalism”. Cf. Topal 2021, 82, and Çevik 2021, 59.

equality of ethnic groups and religions in administration.⁸ Historians agree that these and similar measures that, in Salim Cevik's words, attempted "to transform all the subjects of an empire into an all-inclusive imperial national identity" (Cevik 2021) were triggered mainly by the need to counter ever-growing European influence and involvement in the Empire and to contain the destabilising impact Western political ideology, especially nationalism and the ideas of the French Revolution, and Western cultural hegemony might have on the Empire's inner stability.

Ottoman fears of this kind were indeed not unfounded. Revolts in the Balkans (Serbia 1804–06, 1815–17) and the Greek War of Independence (1821–29) had already led to territorial losses, Algeria had become a French colony in 1830, and England and France were active on a large scale in several parts of the Arab world. The successes of independence movements in Europe could, Ottomans were afraid, possibly inspire similar secessionist tendencies in other parts of the Empire, among which the Arab regions; non-Muslim minorities were already being courted and promised support by European powers overall in the Empire, especially so in the Levant, where France even intervened militarily as a 'protector' of the Christian Maronites after the 1860–61 civil war. And Western ideas were indeed eagerly received also by Arab elites because they seemed to provide useful models for the East on its way to the much-desired 'progress', 'civilisation', and 'modernity'.⁹

On the other hand, Arabs also saw the negative aspects of European influence, from direct colonisation (as in the case of Algeria) and political-military interference (as in Lebanon or, earlier, on the Crimea) to economic exploitation and an erosion of the East's cultural self-esteem.¹⁰ Thus, while the Western

8 For an analysis of the legal implications of the Edict, see Ozil 2021, 169–90.

9 For an early encounter with Western culture and civilisation, still unbiased by the negative impact of European colonialism, cf. Rifā'a Rāfi' al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's (1801–1871) detailed – and rather appreciative, though not at all uncritical – report about his study mission to France, 1826–1831: *Takhlīṣ al-ibriz fī talkhiṣ Bārīz*, aw: *al-Diḡān al-naḡis bi-'iwān Bārīs* (The Extraction of Gold: an Overview of Paris), ed. N.N. (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-miṣriyya al-'amma lil-kitāb, [1834] 1993). For an analysis of the later development of the image of the West in Arabic fiction (and drama), cf. Wielandt 1980 and El-Enany 2006.

10 One of the most significant expressions of criticism of Westernisation is the emergence, from the middle of the nineteenth century, of the character of the *mutaḡarnij*, the "Euromaniac", in Arabic literature (corresponding to the *alaḡranga zūppe* "Euro-fop" in Turkish). Through these types, the authors ridicule the unquestioned adoption of European fashion, attitudes, and habits, mostly from a moral (but, in Turkish, also from an economic) perspective. At the same time,

model looked promising in many respects (technology, culture), European powers were also felt as a danger, so that, on the political scale, the good old Ottoman Empire still seemed to be the safer haven. For a long time, therefore, most Arabs saw their own interests better served within the framework of the existing Empire and readily accepted the ‘pan-Ottoman’ social contract. Ottomanism seemed to allow them to preserve their identities and proceed on the path of modernisation, seen as a combination of technological progress à l’Européenne and a ‘national’ Arab cultural ‘revival’ or ‘renaissance’ (*nahḍa*). There did not seem to be a reason to rise against the Ottoman Empire, and love for one’s homeland (*waṭan*) would not be incompatible with loyalty towards the Empire and a larger ‘Ottoman nation’. However, whenever the Ottomans prevented, or seemed to prevent, them from following their own Arab agendas, the European states could become quasi-natural allies. As we will see below, there was also a lot of (regional and other) variation and a historical dynamic in their manoeuvring between these two poles, because Ottomanism, from the beginning, was not uncontroversial: for the Muslims, it meant the elimination of their previous superior position in the State, while non-Muslims not only gained new rights but also lost former privileges.

The following essay presents some of the choices made by Arab *literati*—‘intellectuals’¹¹ living at the time. Far from claiming to be a comprehensive overview, the chapter should be read as a selective and impressionist first approach to a vast area of research. Important complementary, and partly overlapping, information is found in the present volume. Salim Cevik discusses, among other things, the frequent vacillation between loyalty to the Empire and local patriotism, observable also among ‘my’ Arabs. Madeleine Elfenbein emphasises the role of non-Muslim journalism in the promotion of Ottomanist attitudes and Isa Blumi studies the diverse forms and aims of Ottomanism among Albanian activists and intellectuals. However, with regard to the territory from which their

they are eager to promote pride in one’s own, ‘Eastern’ culture (termed *wujūd ahlī* “the indigenous way of life” in the probably earliest piece of ‘modern’ Arabic fiction, Khalīl al-Khūrī’s *Way! Idhan lastu bi-lfranji* “Alas! I am not a European then!” of 1859/60; the corresponding term in Turkish is *alaturkahk* “life *alla turca*”). On the *mutafarnij/alafranga züppe*, cf. my own study, Guth 2019 (online)/2020 (print), with further references.

¹¹ Although at the time no specific term had been coined yet for ‘intellectual’ in Arabic—nor was English *intellectual* used in the modern sense before the late nineteenth century—, the group of educated people who used to be referred to as *udabā’* ‘literati’ (sg. *adīb*) can probably be seen as ‘intellectuals *avant la lettre*’, given that they were thinkers who engaged with the vital reality of the contemporary world and commented in public on matters they regarded of relevance for their community.

sources originate, both remain, by and large, within the confines of the centre, whereas ‘my’ voices stem from the Arab provinces. And while Elfenbein sheds light particularly on Christians (Elfenbein 2021), my article not only covers Christians (M. al-Naqqāsh, B. al-Bustānī, J. Zaydān, Kh. Muṭrān, F. Anṭūn, L.M. Sawāyā, Ī. Abū Māḍī), but also includes some Muslim positions (A. al-Qabbānī, M. S. al-Bārūdī, I. al-Muwayliḥī, A. al-Ṣayyādī, ‘A. al-Kawākibī, M. al-Ruṣāfī, S. al-Ḥuṣrī). As a whole, it documents a development that matches very well Cevik’s and Elfenbein’s findings: It also shows how widely spread Ottomanist attitudes were, and perhaps especially, among non-Muslims and in the peripheries and how active these groups remained for a long time in promoting an all-inclusive Ottoman identity (perhaps more active than the Muslim Ottomans in the centre themselves); but it also demonstrates that loyalty towards the Ottoman State decreased in relation to the degree Ottoman authorities would narrow their vision of the Ottoman nation from an inclusive multinational Habsburgian model to an exclusive Romanov type of nationalism (Cevik 2021).

1.2 Mid- to end-nineteenth century

As mentioned above, the ‘starting position’ that we can assume for the middle of the nineteenth century to have been the prevalent Arab attitude vis-à-vis Ottoman authority was, in general, loyalty towards the state, seen mostly as a guarantor and protector of relative freedom to preserve one’s religious, linguistic and ethnic-cultural identity and as a bulwark against European colonialism. As pointed out by Madeleine Elfenbein (2021), Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819–1883) had prepared an Arabic translation of the Imperial Edict of 1856, and it is no wonder to find many Arabs of the time continuing the old panegyric tradition (*madiḥ*) in praising the Empire and the Sultan or his local representatives wherever appropriate (Sadgrove 2010b, 248). For instance, Mārūn al-Naqqāsh (1817–1855), another famous pioneer of Arab theatre,¹² after obtaining permission

¹² For more on the author, see Sadgrove 2010b, with further references. Like operas and the novel, theatre too counted among the “modern” genres, introduced in the Middle East, in adaptations from the European model, by the mid-nineteenth century with the hope that it would help reform society and advance civilisational progress. For more on the history of Arab(ic) drama and theatre in general, cf. Starkey, “theatre and drama, modern”, in Meisami and Starkey, eds. 1998, 769–72, with further references, among them M. M. Badawi, *Early Arabic Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Jacob M. Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958), and Nada Tomiche, *Le théâtre*

from the Ottoman authorities in Syria to produce *al-Bakhīl* (The Miser, 1847), a play inspired by Molière's *L'Avare*, lets its protagonist sing (in Act II, Scene 5) the praises of Sultan 'Abd al-Majīd (Abdūlmecit), and this is repeated by the actors behind the curtain (Sadgrove 2010b, 248). In a similar vein, another play, *al-Salīṭ al-ḥasūd* (The Envious, Impertinent One), staged a few years later,

ends with a prayer to God to punish the enemies and bring victory to the Sultan, followed by an epilogue, a prayer for sultan 'Abd al-Majīd and the foreign minister 'Alī Pasha, sung by the actors [...]. Thanks are also addressed to Amin Mukhlīṣ Pasha, the governor of Sidon, who had encouraged Mārūn to set up the theatre and write the plays to open the 'door of civilization' in the country.

(Sadgrove 2010b, 249)

Al-Naqqāsh was prudent enough to make sure he had the authorities' backing. He died before the first Lebanese civil war of 1860–61,¹³ but in the sectarian atmosphere prevailing after the events, it would certainly have been difficult for him, as a Christian, to continue his activities without official support, especially since conservative Muslim circles often disapproved of theatre as 'idolatry', or of the 'misrepresentation' of revered historical personalities in it. As the case of Naqqāsh's younger colleague, Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī (1833–1902),¹⁴ shows, these circles could become very influential. When a chief *ulema* allegedly complained to the Sultan that, "as a result of the theatre's increasing popularity, adultery and sin were spreading in Syria, and women were mixing with men," then obviously it did not matter that al-Qabbānī, too, used to begin and end his performances "with praise or prayers for the Ottoman caliph and sultan" and that he even compared, in the epilogue of one play, Sultan 'Abdūlḥamīd's justice to that of the great 'Abbāsīd caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (Sadgrove 2010a, 273). Nor was it relevant that he was Muslim and from a family of

arabe (Paris: UNESCO, 1969); a more recent study is Monica Ruocco, *Storia del teatro arabo: Dalla nahḍah a oggi* (Roma: Carocci, 2010).

13 Tensions that had been smoldering for some years between Maronite Christian peasants and their Druze landlords, eventually erupted in 1860 after the peasants' leader, Ṭanyūs Shāhīn, had demanded that the feudal class abolish their privileges, and the peasants had begun to revolt. During the clashes, thousands of Maronites were massacred, with Ottoman troops directly or indirectly aiding the Druze forces. The conflict became even more complicated through the involvement of France (as a 'protector' of the Maronites) and the British (who objected to prolonged French presence in the country and argued that pacification should be left to the Ottomans).

14 Despite al-Naqqāsh's precedence, it is usually al-Qabbānī who is regarded today the "father" of Arab(ic) theatre.

Turkish origin and that his theatrical enterprises had been firmly and even financially supported, since 1879, by the enlightened governor, Midḥat Pasha. The chief *ulama*'s evidently weighed heavier, so that as a consequence, it is alleged, "an order was issued banning acting in Damascus in 1884, and al-Qabbānī's theatre was burnt to the ground, perhaps as the result of an arson attack" (Sadgrove 2010a, 268). Following this, the director decided to leave Syria. Together with most of his troupe of actors, writers, poets, composers, singers, musicians and dancers he moved to the "greener pastures" of Egypt (Elfenbein in the present volume) that was nominally still part of the Ottoman Empire but since 1882 already under British occupation, where he found a much more liberal atmosphere, as did several other Levantine intellectuals who had gone through similar experiences.

In spite of such experiences, but also because of the severe censorship that 'Abdülhamid had introduced,¹⁵ as well as the corresponding "inquisition" (Hassan 2006, 31) and persecution, many of this group of *shawām*, i.e., immigrants from Greater Syria (*al-Shām*),¹⁶ nevertheless remained loyal to the Sultan and/or the Empire even after their emigration. Thus, the first thing for the Syrian writer-philosopher Farah Anṭūn (1874–1922) to do after his arrival in Egypt in 1897 was to found a journal he significantly named *al-Jāmi'a al-'Uthmāniyya*,¹⁷ a term that usually is translated as 'Ottoman Union/Community' but may perhaps even be rendered as 'Ottoman Patriotism'.¹⁸ From this we may conclude

15 On censorship in the Empire in general, cf. Cioeta 1979.

16 Often, emigration from Greater Syria was also motivated by other than political reasons—economic, social, religious, ...—and headed for the Americas rather than Egypt (although Egypt was de facto independent already since the Ottoman governor, Meḥmed/Muḥammad 'Alī, in 1841 had been granted the right to life-long rule and hereditary succession to his position). The first immigrants to North America, e.g., arrived around 1850. A larger wave left their home countries after the 1860/61 civil war. During the following years, many sought refuge abroad from periodic inter-communal strife at home. In the American exile ('the' *mahjar*) as well as in Egypt, Syrians, mostly Christian *literati*, played an important role in the establishment and operation of the private printing press and, through it, the stimulation of lively public debate on all kinds of issues of relevance for the local societies, and the Arabs at large; in this way, they played a prominent role in the development of a modern public discourse and the creation of an Arab civil society. See, e.g., Landau 1968 (check index for 'Diaspora' and 'Emigranten, Emigration').

17 Hassan 2006, 29. – From the 13th issue (15 Sept. 1899) onwards, the attribute *'uthmāniyya* was dropped, cutting the title down to the more general *al-Jāmi'a*.

18 Late nineteenth / early twentieth century Arabic conceptual terminology is still rather unspecific and 'volatile'. While, today, *jāmi'a* most often denotes 'university', the literal sense of the word—an active participle meaning 'the gathering one, uniting one'—is still more graspable

that, for intellectuals like Anṭūn, Ottomanism obviously still made sense – perhaps even still as much, or nearly as much, as it had made sense for Abū l-Hudà al-Ṣayyādī (1850–1909) whom earlier scholarly literature viewed as one of the most important Arab propagandists of the Sultan’s pan-Islamic-coloured Ottomanism (Eich 2007). Al-Ṣayyādī had become *naqīb al-ashraf*¹⁹ of Aleppo at a very young age and in 1879 advanced to the position of a religious adviser to the young ‘Abdülhamid II. “Once established in the Sultan’s entourage in Istanbul, he [also] became the most important Rifā‘iyya *shaykh* of the Ottoman Empire” (Eich 2007), a position he used primarily to work for the integration of scholars from northern Syria and Iraq – indeed, ‘integration’ could be yet another apt translation of the term *jāmi‘a*! In addition, more recent research tends to see the scholar more as a reformer than as a pan-Islamist, so that one may have to regard his Ottomanism as more secular than previously assumed. This can be corroborated by the fact that, “[i]n his later writings, especially those from after 1900, Abū l-Hudà devoted more space to political issues, particularly the new ideology of nationalism, and argued for a multinational empire” (Eich 2007).²⁰

However, stating that Arabs by and large remained loyal to the Empire is not so say that there weren’t also, occasionally, more critical attitudes and voices of protest. In the case of the Egyptian poet Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Bārūdī (1839–1904), expressions of deep loyalty may even be followed, in one and the same person and quite unexpectedly, by calls to rise against the rulers. Serving in the Ottoman army in its campaign against separatist uprisings in Crete (1866–68), al-Bārūdī had composed a poem in which he

condemned the inhabitants of the island for rising up against their Ottoman overlords, calling them a “people mired in the temptations of Satan (*al-shayṭān*), having slunk away

in expressions like *jāmi‘a riyaḍiyya* ‘sport association’ or *al-jāmi‘a al-‘arabiyya* ‘The Arab League.’ The latter term, however, can be found in Monteil (1960, 108) also as denoting ‘panarabisme,’ while the same study gives the whole semantic range of *jāmi‘a* as “communauté, union, fédération; ligue; université; accumulateur” (Monteil 1960, 108). ‘Ottoman Patriotism’ for *al-jāmi‘a al-‘uthmāniyya* is the rendering chosen by Hilary Kilpatrick in her translation of the term as used by Jurji Zaydān a decade after Farah Anṭūn in an article on “Arabs and Turks – Before and After the Constitution” (1909, see below).

¹⁹ I.e., head of the descendants of the Prophet.

²⁰ For Ottomanism transforming into Ottoman *nationalism*, and the Empire into an object of love, see below, p. 23 (Sāṭi‘ al-Ḥuṣṣrī’s idea).

from their obedience to the Sultan (*al-sultān*),” thus implying that rebellion was a sin for which not only secular, but religious, judgment awaited.

(DeYoung 2010a, 63)

When he returned victorious from the campaign, he was awarded the Ottoman Medal of Merit, Fourth Class, by the Sultan, and at first continued to behave like a “staunch supporter of the monarchy” (DeYoung 2010a, 62). In 1868, only two years after his pro-Ottoman poem, however, he suddenly, and for reasons that have remained unclear so far, composed another poem in which he depicted himself as

calling out to the Egyptians: “O People, rise up! Life is but an opportunity and, over time, there are many paths abounding and chances to secure advantage.” This clarion challenge [...] could hardly be read in the context of the times as anything but the most radical exhortation to his audience to rid themselves of the tyrants oppressing them.

(DeYoung 2010a, 63)²¹

When Landau observes a similarly fluctuating attitude almost three decades later in Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī’s stance vis-à-vis the Sultan and the Turks, it seems to him “ambivalent, not to say opportunist” (Landau 1987, 73).²² Thus, al-Bārūdī and al-Muwayliḥī are probably good cases in point to demonstrate that we can never be sure whether an intellectual’s use of traditional panegyrics has to be taken as a serious expression of wholehearted support or merely a strategic measure of careful self-protection when an author felt the need to voice discontent and criticism but knew very well that this could have severe consequences.

1.3 The situation “over there”

The Egyptian Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī (1844–1906) had already had several unpleasant encounters with the Ottoman authorities before he published his “renowned, indeed infamous” report (Allen 2008, 1), titled *Mā hunālika* (Over Yonder²³), on the state of affairs in contemporary Istanbul, as he viewed it. While in

21 For a similar vacillation, also in the context of the rebellion on Crete, cf. Elfenbein 2021, section “Dissidents or Palace Journalists?”

22 For another case where a local’s vacillating opinion is interpreted by Westerners as “rich illustration of [...] shifty Oriental character” instead of a cautiously and prudently manoeuvring subject, cf. Elfenbein *ibid.*

23 Literally, “what (is/can be found) there (i.e., in Istanbul)”. “Over Yonder” is Roger Allen’s rendering, Allen 2008, 1 (with note 1, p. 18).

Italy (where he had joined the Egyptian ‘vice-king’, *khedive*²⁴ Ismā‘il, on the latter’s deposition/abdication in 1879), al-Muwayliḥī had continued to publish newspapers, most notably *al-Ittiḥād* (The Union), and had penned in it some critical commentaries that “provoked the anger of the Ottoman Sultan”.²⁵ Shortly later (1884/85), while in France, al-Muwayliḥī had “published a further issue of *Al-Ittihad* which was so critical of Ottoman foreign policy that his expulsion from France was engineered by the Ottoman authorities” (Allen 2008, 3).

The affair taught al-Muwayliḥī that it might be wiser to change both his topic and approach. While in London, he therefore turned to attacking the *British* government and writing *in support* of the Sultan (earlier, he had reproached ‘Abdülḥamīd for having remained too passive when England intervened and eventually occupied Egypt after the ‘Urābī uprisings, 1879–82). His tactic worked: Seeking to secure the eloquent journalist’s support, the Sultan invited him to Istanbul in 1885 and appointed him as a Member of the Encümen-i dāniş (≈ Academy of Science) and Under-Secretary of State for Education.

During the following ten years, al-Muwayliḥī gained intimate insight into the structure and processes taking place in the Ottoman state administration. He was shocked and very concerned about the situation, but knowing that the Sultan had his spies everywhere and critics had to reckon with severe punishment he remained silent and held back his observations for more than seven years. However from 1893, it seems that he felt he *had* to break his silence and inform the public about the dangers he saw lying ahead, and so he began to publish, under various pseudonyms, a series of articles in the Cairene press, mostly in the pro-British *al-Muqaṭṭam*. When it came to voicing Ottoman-critical opinions, a certain affiliation with the occupying forces seemed to be a viable compromise although al-Muwayliḥī, ultimately, regarded *foreign* intervention as the real cause of the current deplorable situation (as we will soon see

24 The title ‘khedive’ (Arabic *khidiww/i*, from Persian *khidīw*, *khadīw* ‘lord, prince, ruler’) “was formally conferred by the Sultan upon Ismā‘il in a *firmān* issued on 8 June 1867 [...]. [... With it,] Ismā‘il assumed a rank which elevated his standing to a position closer to royalty. [... The title also marked] the virtual independence of Egypt and her right to enter into special treaties and agreements governing posts, customs and trade transit. These provisions were to give Ismā‘il freedom in the financial, administrative and judicial arrangements of the country” (Vatikiotis 2012). (Reinkowski 2016, 240, n. 9, speaks of a “Phantasietitel”, which is not completely correct.) – When Ottoman suzerainty ended and Egypt officially became a British protectorate (1914), the local rulers would even call themselves “sultan”, and after the end of the protectorate (1922) “kings”.

25 Citation is from Allen 2008, 3; cf., however, for the other elements of the author’s biography, Landau 1987, 71–72, and Allen 2008 in general.

below). “The Sultan’s spies were on his trail, however,” and “eventually he was found out [and] charged” (Landau 1987, 73). Luckily, he was subsequently acquitted, but, evidently, the lesson sufficed to tell the author that he should leave and he did so in 1895. Back in Egypt, he somehow ‘exploded’: from June 1895 to February 1896, he published, in *al-Muqaṭṭam*, his highly critical and uncensored report about what he had observed *hunālika* “over there”, in Istanbul. His articles were then also collected and brought out as a 256-pages book the same year, still under a pseudonym – “by an honourable/worthy Egyptian man-of-letters” (*li-adīb fāḍil min al-Miṣriyyīn*).²⁶

Al-Muwayliḥī paints a devastating picture: a weak sultan, driven in many of his actions by an almost paranoid fear, surrounded by an incapable, only privately-motivated entourage “who have driven away all faithful and capable state officials” (Landau 1987, 74) but live themselves in permanent fear of the myriad of spies whom the Sultan has employed to keep him informed about the smallest details – allegedly, “over 150 reports [are] submitted [to him] daily” (ibid.). Add to this the “duplication of functions as well as the venality, nepotism and ignorance” of many dignitaries, whom the author also accuses of “lacking a minimal sense of patriotism, as in ‘selling’ Tunisia to France or not attending to Egypt’s affairs at the time of uprising”. An inflated bureaucracy and an inefficient military are to blame for the grievous territorial losses of the Empire, financial disorganization, miscarriages of justice and state expropriation of individual land-holdings (ibid., 75). Interestingly enough, however, al-Muwayliḥī nevertheless always remains loyal to the Ottoman state as such. In an article entitled “The Ottoman Nation” (*al-Umma al-‘Uthmāniyya*)²⁷, pub-

²⁶ Publishing anonymously or with a pseudonym was a common practice during the reign of ‘Abdülhamid II (but also later). It secured a certain degree of protection from persecution—not the least so, I would claim, because it turned criticism into a kind of ‘game’ that, by hiding the identity of the speaker, observed the rules of politeness (*adab*) and in this way facilitated non-persecution also for those targeted by criticism.

²⁷ The Arabic title corresponds to the Turkish ‘*Oṣmānlı millet* or *millet-i ‘Oṣmāniye* ‘Ottoman nation’ mentioned by Salim Çevik 2021 (following Masami Arai) as referring to the idea of the Empire as a nation state. – Arabic *umma* is attested already in pre-Islamic times. With all likelihood, it is a borrowing, either from Hebrew *ummā*^h ‘tribe, people’ or from the same Sumerian source from which the Hebrew word itself is taken (Jeffery 1938, 69; Pennacchio 2014, 158). In the Koran, where *umma* is of frequent occurrence, it has a broad meaning, signifying a group of people sharing ethnic, religious, moral and/or ideological allegiance. In classical Islamic literature, the word was mainly used to denote the universal Islamic religio-political community

lished a week before the *Mā hunālika* series and later serving as a kind of introduction to the book version,²⁸ he underlines that, in his opinion, the current situation of disintegration and fragmentation (*tamazzuq, tashattut*) of the Empire is caused, ultimately, by “the foreigners’ interference into its properties” (*tadākhul al-ajānib fī amlākiḥā* – al-Muwayliḥī 1896, 10).²⁹ Unlike the many opportunists who look at the Ottoman state as if it were a burning house from which one should try to take what the flames have not touched yet, praising oneself lucky to have preceded the collapse, he thinks that a constitutional system could still save the Empire and that it therefore is the task of all honorable men (*aḥrār*) to work towards reform (*iṣlāḥ*) and convince people that “the Ottoman nation’s health is in their [own] hands and that this nation is far from disintegrating and declining [... After all,] the glory [earned] in reviving a nation is better than to be wealthy at its death” (*ibid.*, 12).³⁰

To support his argument, he points to the Austrian Empire as a positive example:

with regard to religions (*adyān*), it consists of Catholics, Muslims, Orthodox, Protestants, and Jews, and with regard to ethnic groups (*ajnās*), of Poles, Bohemians, Germans, Italians, Hungarians, Slaves. But this has not been an obstacle for the well-ordered condition (*ḥusn al-nizām*) in which it finds itself.

(al-Muwayliḥī 1896, 11)³¹

(Lewis 1991, 32). During the Arabic *nahḍa*, the term underwent a process of semantic extension and came to encompass (like Turkish *millet*) the equivalent of French *nation* (as in *al-Umam* [pl.] *al-muttaḥida* ‘The United Nations’), see e.g., Massignon 1941-1946. In this sense, *umma* features as one of the “eight (key) concepts” of the time in the influential Egyptian educator Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī’s *al-Kalim al-thamān* (1881/82); for the author, an *umma* is held together by a unity of language (*lisān*), territory (*makān*), and religion (*dīn*), where language is the most important (Delanoue 1963, 10). For the modern development of the term, where it for some time ‘competed’ with *milla* (which is the source of the Turkish term), see, e.g., Lewis 1991, 38–39, 41.

28 *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, no. 1898 (22 June 1895), and al-Muwayliḥī 1896, 9–13, respectively.

29 The author does not specify which interventions he has in mind, but one may think of the French turning Algeria into a colony, the Russians on the Crimea, the French and British in Lebanon, and, of course, the British occupation of Egypt.

30 *inna l-umma al-‘uthmāniyya dawā’uhā fī yadīhim, wa-hiya ab‘ad al-umam ‘an al-talāshī wa-l-inḥilāl... al-majd fī iḥyā’ umma khayr min al-māl fī mawtiḥā.*

31 *tata‘allaf, min jihat al-adyān, min kāthūlik wa-muslimin wa-urthūdhuks wa-brūtistānt wa-yahūd, wa-tatashakkal, min jihat al-ajnās, min būlūniyyin wa-būhimiyyin wa-almāniyyin wa-ṭalyāniyyin wa-majariyyin wa-ṣaqāliba, wa-mā mana‘ahā dhālika min ḥusn al-nizām alladhī hiya ‘alayhi.*

For al-Muwayliḥī, the ideal was still a centralised state headed by the Sultan (Landau 1987, 75); but in order for the system to function properly, it has to be reformed. As an “expert in the characteristics of nations” (*‘ālim bi-akhlāq al-umam* – al-Muwayliḥī 1896, 9), the author regards it as his task to inform the nation of the alarming situation in the capital, to point out the dangers that lie ahead if things continue like they are now, and to urge the “Ottoman nation” “to demand its rights and call on its Government to institute self-reform, maintain the constitution, reconvene parliament, institute a responsible cabinet and extend freedom of thought” (Landau 1987, 74). He draws his motivation from the conviction that, “as it was possible for one man [‘Abdülḥamīd] to paralyze [lit., make lie down, put to sleep] a [whole] nation, it should be possible for one individual also to awaken it again” (al-Muwayliḥī 1896, 10). Given the author’s loyalty and patriotism, “it is undoubtedly ironic,” Landau concludes in his analysis of al-Muwayliḥī’s report, “that the authorities in Egypt, acting upon demands from Istanbul, seized and destroyed most copies of *Mā hunālika* soon after its publication in 1896. A few copies of this work have survived, however, and serve as witness to al-Muwayliḥī’s courage” (Landau 1987, 81).

1.4 Mecca, the “Mother of the Cities”

A case that resembles al-Muwayliḥī’s in many ways but also goes an important step further is that of the Syrian ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī (1849 or 1854/55–1902). Like al-Muwayliḥī, al-Kawākibī had gathered intimate knowledge about the Ottoman state and its administration both from serving in official positions and from a longer stay in Istanbul, and like his Egyptian contemporary, he had suffered unpleasant experiences with the authorities when he had voiced sharp, if constructive, criticism. The weekly *al-Shahbā’* that he had started to publish in 1878 in Aleppo had been closed down after only fifteen issues by order of the Ottoman governor due to its outspoken criticism of despotism (in general, but of course alluding to the Sultan) and of his local representative, the *vali* (*wālī*) Cemil (Jamil) Pasha. Sometime later, quarrels with the *wālī* had also brought him to a trial where he was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death; luckily he was acquitted after an appeal, but his property was confiscated nevertheless so that he eventually decided to leave the country. He arrived in Cairo in 1898 or 1899, i.e., only four or five years after al-Muwayliḥī had returned from Istanbul, and like his Egyptian colleague, the first thing al-Kawākibī felt urged to do was publish his critical comments (under pseudonyms, as also al-Muwayliḥī had chosen to do), drafted previously in Syria, on the state of affairs in the Empire. The first of the two books, titled *Umm al-qurā*

(lit., Mother of Cities, i.e., Mecca), came out in 1899 – “almost certainly clandestinely,” as Sylvia Haim assumes (Haim 2012) – and presented a kind of utopia: the vision of an Islamic conference taking place in Mecca, thus not only “illustrating the importance of Mecca to the Islamic world” but also discussing the caliphate and arguing, in Haim’s paraphrasis,

that the problems of Islam would be solved by transferring the caliphate from the house of ‘Uthmān to Quraysh.³² An Arab caliph would be installed in Mecca and would exercise, with the concurrence of a special council of consultation (*shūrā*), political authority over the Ḥijāz³³ only. This caliphate would be devoid of all other political and military powers; its spiritual nature, as well as the special position of the Arabs within Islam, are greatly stressed.

(Haim 2012)

The fact that al-Kawākibī had stayed in Syria for a long time and continued to work in several official positions – among which even that of mayor of Aleppo – despite regular harassment and intimidation can give proof of his wish to serve his Arab compatriots *from within* the system, i.e., within the existing structures of the late Empire. However, in contrast to al-Muwayliḥī and many others who stuck to this overall framework although they were highly critical of it, ideas like those expressed in *Umm al-qurā* give clear evidence of the fact that, from a certain moment onwards, al-Kawākibī must have come to the conclusion that a more radical solution was needed, a solution that also reinstalled the Arabs in their historic position as leaders of the Muslim world. *Umm al-qurā* clearly marks al-Kawākibī’s transition from an earlier, still ultimately Ottoman-loyal attitude to a position that stresses the Arabs’ historical entitlement to *spiritual* leadership in the Muslim world and also claims back for them parts of the Arab territory that is currently under Ottoman rule – the Hijaz. It does not explicitly demand the ousting of the Sultan and the end of the Ottoman Empire; but could one imagine an empire in which the caliph was an Arab (from the tribe of Quraysh) and the Sultan a Turk and which had two capitals – Mecca as its spiritual centre, and Istanbul as the seat of worldly power? It is no wonder

³² I.e., from the (Turkish) Ottomans (who traced their dynasty back to Osman [Ar. ‘Uthmān] I, r. c. 1299–1323/24) to the (Arab) Quraysh, a Meccan clan to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged and who later claimed the right to genealogical successorship (against the Shī‘a who tried to convey successorship on ‘Alī, the Prophet’s son-in-law, and his offspring, as well as against the Khārijīyya, who wanted to elect the ‘best Muslim’ as Muhammad’s successor (i.e., *khalīfa* ‘caliph’).

³³ I.e., the Hejaz, the region in the west of what today is Saudi Arabia where Islam emerged and where its two holiest sites, the cities of Mecca and Medina, are situated.

that later al-Kawākibī was seen as a pioneer of pan-Arab nationalism and a voice that called for Arab sovereignty, all the more so as he also denounced, in the follow-up work to *Umm al-qurā*, the Sultan as a despot (*mustabidd*). *Ṭabāʿiʿ al-istibdād wa-maṣāriʿ al-istiʿbād* (The Characteristics of Despotism and the Fatalities of Enslavement) first appeared in 1900 as a series of anonymous articles in the influential daily *al-Muʾayyad* (The Stronghold [?]³⁴)³⁵ and is “to a large extent a faithful rendering in Arabic of *Della Tirannide* (1800) by Vittorio Alfieri” (Haim 1954 and 2012).³⁶ In the work, al-Kawākibī

develops the idea that despotism operates by stripping the individuals it enslaves of their will and agency. Moreover, he sets forth an account of a democratic and quasi-socialist Islamic order that establishes individual freedom and social cohesion through its institutions and the virtues it inculcates in all citizens.

(Y. Noorani, in El-Ariss 2018, 354)

The author did not live to see much of what his writings provoked. He died in 1902, of “mysterious” causes, allegedly poisoned by Turkish agents, although this was never proven.

1.5 The ‘national’ voice becoming stronger

Al-Kawākibī’s case did not remain an exception. When, for instance, the Lebanese poet Khalīl Muṭrān (1872?–1949) published his poem *1806–1870* (1908) in which he hailed the newly united Germans’ victory over Napoléon III and depicted the emperor as a tyrant, this was read “as an indirect expression of the youthful poet’s rebellion against the rule of the Ottoman sultan”. It did not take long until his “uncompromising attitude [...] land[ed] him in political trouble

³⁴ The title is a passive participle, form II, from root ʿ-Y-D, meaning, literally, “the supported, aided one” or, more idiomatically, “steadfast, victorious; a fortification, or stronghold”. In former times, the word could be part of a sultan’s name (e.g., al-Muʾayyad fi l-Dīn, i.e., the one who receives – divine – support in religion, is a steadfast believer, a stronghold of Islamic belief). It is not clear what exactly the newspaper title expresses. It may also have been chosen in allusion to the Koran, where *ʿayd* can mean ‘might, power, strength’ (as in surah 51:47) and the verb *ʿayyada* signifies ‘to support, bolster up, strengthen’ (as in 2:87).

³⁵ Founded 1889 and later mainly edited by the Egyptian journalist ʿAlī Yūsuf (1863–1913). According to Peri Bearman (article “Yūsuf, ʿAlī”, in *Encyclopædia of Islam*, second edition), the paper dominated the Muslim press between 1889 and 1913; it was considered anti-British and pan-Islamic, served as a platform for Egyptian nationalists and an advocate of constitutional reform. For a standard reference on the history of the Arab press, see Ayalon 1995.

³⁶ For a detailed analysis of *Ṭabāʿiʿ al-istibdād*, see Zimeri 2007.

and end[ed] in his abrupt departure for Paris and eventually Egypt” (DeYoung 2010b, 229). Shortly after his arrival there, Muṭrān used his new freedom to underline, in what is probably the “most memorable and frequently anthologised of Muṭrān’s political poems” (ibid., 232), *al-Muqāṭa‘a* (The Boycott, 1909, consisting of only six lines), that

no matter what they [the censors, prosecutors, tormentors] do – destroy their [i.e., his fellow lovers of liberty] pens, cut off their hands or their tongues – he and his allies will [always] find another means to express themselves [... and their] spirit will [always] remain free.

(DeYoung 2010b, 232).

Al-Kawākibī’s and Muṭrān’s cases may be extreme. Yet, they can probably serve as an indicator of a general shift in Arabs’ attitudes towards the political framework that most of them still belonged to at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Although, in contrast to a radical critic like al-Kawākibī, many of them still would not question the Ottoman Empire and Ottomanism as such, there is a clear tendency to stress, within the given system, one’s Arab identity and interests, and a desire that this particular, ‘national’ voice be heard and considered in religious, political and administrative contexts. The exodus of many *shawām*, mentioned above, of which al-Qabbānī, Faraḥ Anṭūn, al-Kawākibī, Muṭrān and other *literati*-‘intellectuals’ formed part, is to a large extent motivated by the fact that it had become almost impossible under Ottoman censorship to express any more this self-confident Arab(ic) voice and critical opinion. This was the case even if they did not contradict the basic idea of Ottomanism and even if many of them, ultimately, still remained loyal: it was prohibited to use words like ‘fatherland’ (*waṭan*), ‘constitution’ (*dustūr*), ‘despotism’ (*istibdād*), ‘council of representatives’ (*majlis shūrā*), ‘liberty’ (*hurriyya*), etc., in any writing, “and newspapers making use of these words were often abolished” (Zimeri 2007, 8³⁷).

1.6 1908—Arabs, the Constitution, and the İTC/CUP

However, the abolition of “despotism” and the re-introduction of the constitution and a council-based system of governance were exactly what the majority of *literati* now supported. Even al-Kawākibī’s vision of a future Islamic confer-

37 Drawing on Cioeta 1979, 176, and J. Deny’s entry (1960) on “‘Abd al-Ḥamīd II” in *EI*².

ence in Mecca demonstrates this: not even the Caliph should rule without asking the advice of a consultative council (*majlis shūrā*), and in contrast to an autocratic despot (*mustabidd*) he will have to obey the (divine) laws himself. No wonder then that in general Arabs welcomed the Young Turk revolution, the ITC/CUP and the Constitution of 1908. Shortly after the event, we find, for example, the Lebanese woman writer Labība Mikhā'il Sawāyā (1876–1916)³⁸ publishing a historical romance, *Ḥasnā' Sālōnīk* (The Beautiful Lady of Salonika [Thessaloniki], 1909), in which a “prominent Young Turk who fights for freedom and as a result ultimately loses his life” is heroicised (Moosa 1997, 248). A similar picture emerges from Jurjī Zaydān's (1861–1914) novel *al-Inqilāb al-'Uthmānī* (The Ottoman Coup, 1911). Matti Moosa's summary shows how the author frames contemporary politics with a lachrymose love story and in this way makes the reader sympathise with the oppositional movement:

Shirin, a young lady, is in love with Ramiz, a revolutionary, who attacks the Sultan's despotism. But Sadiq, an opportunist who comes from an influential Turkish family, is also in love with Shirin and connives with her father to destroy the love between Shirin and Ramiz so that he might marry Shirin. After many intrigues which take us in and out of the Sultan's palace and the company of Young Turks, Shirin finally marries Ramiz, while Sadiq is killed in the revolution of 1908.

(Moosa 1997, 213–14)

“It is reported,” Moosa further tells us, that the novel “provoked great concern in contemporary Syria and Egypt” and that even the Russian novelist Maxim Gorki showed interest in it (Moosa 1997, 218).

As, among others, the example of the famous poet Īliyyā Abū Mādī (1898/90–1957) shows, an Arab's support for the Young Turks and the re-institution of the Constitution still does not necessarily imply disloyalty towards the Sultan. The poet can, on the one hand, in a poem titled *Taḥiyyat al-dustūr* (Greeting the Constitution), welcome the Constitution in eloquent verses and praise the return of freedom, including freedom of expression, concluding with the statement that, from now on, there is “no unjust ruler anymore,” because, from now on, “every just man rules.”³⁹ At the same time, however, he can, in

38 Sawāyā was one of the first Arab women writers, most famous among whom is probably her (slightly younger) contemporary, Mayy Ziyāda (May Ziade, 1886–1941). For a short overview of early Arab women writing, see Cooke 1986; for more detailed surveys, cf. Cooke 1993/2012 and Zeidan 1995.

39 “fa-lam yabqa finā ḥākimun ghayru ‘ādilī / wa-lam yabqa finā ‘ādilun ghayru ḥākimi.” Last line of *Taḥiyyat al-dustūr* (Long Live the Constitution, 1908; metre: *ṭawīl*) – Abū Mādī [1911] = [n.d.], 641.

another poem, specifically address “‘Abdülhamid after the Proclamation of the Constitution” (*‘Abd al-Ḥamid ba’dā i’lān al-dustūr*, as the title has it) to congratulate the Sultan on his luck and assure him of the support of his subjects:

Oh, Father of the people, [...]

Look, and you’ll find them [your people] standing around your palace, / looking [at you] like a lover looks at someone who is favoured [by God/Destiny]. [...]

The mischief-makers are dispersed now, you got rid of them / after they had all the time long accused the people of sowing discord, fearing [themselves] fragmentation.

Oh, how much anxiety/fear had they sown on earth and always retreated [i.e., denied own responsibility] / saying [to blame is] a people that is a disturber (*muqliq*), and what a disturber!⁴⁰

In these verses, the poet – like al-Muwayliḥi before him (see above) – puts all blame for the inner fragmentation and current disintegration of the Empire on the Sultan’s entourage, disloyal advisors and egoistic officials, but not on the Sultan himself. The latter is rather shown as a victim of those traitors. If he is to blame at all, then for a certain weakness (cf., again, al-Muwayliḥi who depicts the ruler as governed by paranoia), a weakness the poet urges him to eventually overcome, now that the coup fortunately has done away with the Empire’s enemies. All injustice and oppression suffered from the Ottoman authorities before 1908 are interpreted as having occurred against the Sultan’s will; coming to ‘Abdülhamid’s defence, Abū Māḍi assures him of the continuing loyalty of his subjects – they have always been on his side, always shown deep understanding for his difficult situation, even if the “mischief-makers” (*al-mufsidūn*) had regularly accused the *people* of instigating rebellion, and the people will be with him all the more now. But now, they also have all right to expect that he will act according to his true nature and let them feel that he is indeed the benevolent “Father of the People” as whom his subjects love him.

Voices like this make clear that the idea of an all-inclusive empire under the sultan’s wise rule remained a constant hope for the educated elites for a very long time indeed. Other Arab poetry of the time may be less positive about the Sultan than Abū Māḍi’s verses. But in general, most contemporaries still stick to the ideas of “union” (*ittiḥād*) (of the Empire) and “progress” (*taraqqī*)

⁴⁰ My translation, S.G. – The original has: *abā l-sha’bi* [...] // *taṭalla’ tajid-hu* [sc. *al-sha’ba*] *ḥawla qasrika wāqifan / yuḥaddiq taḥḍiqa l-muḥibbi li-muwaffaqi* // [...] // *tafarraqa ‘anka l-mufsidūna wa-ṭālamā / ramū* [sic!] *l-sha’ba bi-l-tafrīqi khawfa l-tafarruqi* // *wa-kam aqlaqū fi l-arḍi thumma tarāja’ū / yaqūlūna “sha’bun muqliqun ayyu muqliqi”*. From *‘Abd al-Ḥamid ba’dā i’lān al-dustūr* (‘Abdülhamid after the Proclamation of the Constitution, 1908; metre: *ṭawīl*), quoted as in Abū Māḍi [1911] = [n.d.], 507–8.

(of society, of the East) that also the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP, Turkish *İttihād ve Teraqqī Cem'iyeti*, İTC) (of the Empire) has in its name. Arab writing therefore mostly comes in support of the coup and the İTC/CUP's agenda. An exemplary voice in this respect may be that of the Iraqi poet Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfī (1875–1945). For him, like for numerous other writers and intellectuals

[t]he announcement lifting the suspension of the Ottoman Constitution in July 1908 meant [...] that political debate could flourish at home [...]. Newspaper publishing in Iraq also received a boost, because the strict censorship 'Abdülhamid had imposed was lifted and licenses to publish private newspapers could more easily be obtained.

(DeYoung 2010c, 277)

It is not surprising, then, to find that al-Ruṣāfī composed many of his poems during this period as vehicles for support of CUP policies (DeYoung 2010c, 279).

1.7 Love for the Ottoman fatherland

In a similar vein, but augmented by the emotional element of patriotic fervour, the famous educator Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī (1880–1968) in 1913 delivered five lectures in Istanbul, entitled *Vaṭan için* (For the Fatherland), in which “he called for building a new Ottoman community based on the idea of the fatherland as an object of love” (Choueiri 2012). A quick glance at al-Ḥuṣrī's background and early life⁴¹ is enough to understand his strong Ottomanist leanings: he was a real ‘child of the (multinational) Empire.’ Born in Ṣan‘ā', Yemen, to parents from Aleppo, Syria – his father had graduated from al-Azhar, Egypt, before he became an Ottoman judge and Director of the Court of Criminal Appeals in the Yemeni capital – Sāṭi' had learned Arabic, Turkish and French at an early age and then received his higher education from the *Mülkiye* in Istanbul. After graduating with distinction in 1900, al-Ḥuṣrī went to the Balkans to work as a natural-science teacher before he soon became district governor in Kosovo and Fiorina. Having developed a keen interest in both the rights of ‘national’ communities and questions of modern education, he had already been in contact with the İTC/CUP before 1908, and when he returned to Istanbul after 1908, he was “determined to propagate and implement his belief in a modern educa-

⁴¹ Biographical data given in this paragraph are excerpted from Choueiri 2012. For more details see Cleveland 1971 (and later editions).

tion system, coupled with his desire to articulate a secular notion of Ottomanism” (Choueiri 2012). He tried to achieve this goal by editing new journals, publishing modern-style school textbooks and taking part in public debates on contemporary issues. Between 1909 and 1912 he even assumed the directorship of the *Dārülmü‘allimîn* (Teachers’ Training College), “restructuring and modernising [...] its entire curricula and management” (Choueiri 2012). Given al-Ḥusri’s prominent position, it is no surprise that his ideas of producing loyal Ottoman citizens by installing *love* for the Empire-fatherland into their hearts through education became rather influential at the time and laid the foundation for later nationalist theory.

1.8 After the Balkan Wars

After the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913 in which the Ottomans suffered significant territorial losses in Europe, the Empire “was increasingly becoming an association of Arabic speakers and Turkish speakers, and this cast into higher relief the role of the Arab territories in the fabric of the state” (DeYoung 2010c, 279). The awareness of their increased importance and strengthened position encouraged many Arabs to demand a greater autonomy for their territories, a controversial idea for the discussion of which an Arab Congress was convened in Paris in June 1913. The option of combining, on the one hand, the maintenance of “the integrity of the Empire as a bulwark against European colonization” with, on the other hand, a higher degree of Arab independence within its boundaries was debated under the heading of “decentralisation” (*lā-markaziyya*) (DeYoung 2010c, 279).

It did not take long, however, until such calls not only began to take on a sharper tone but, ultimately, also demanded *complete* national independence. Apparently, the general shift of opinion was triggered by

the strictures imposed by the CUP’s advocacy of “Turkification”⁴² in the territories they ruled, that is, the deliberate adoption of rules specifying Turkish as the only language to be employed in all official activities, from the schools to the law courts, and (as some Arabs believed) a preference for the appointment of ethnic Turks in upper level government positions.

(DeYoung 2010c, 279)

⁴² Cf. Cevik 2020, who describes this process as a shift from a multinational Habsburgian model to a Romanov model that aimed at the creation of one single core nation.

Even then, however, some Arabs still favoured looking for solutions to these issues within the framework of adherence to the Empire. Al-Ruṣāfī, for instance, at first welcomed ‘decentralisation’ proposals in the poem *Fī mu’riḍ al-sayf* (The Flat of the Sword); then, when the İTC/CUP had increasingly become hostile to the Congress, he condemned both İTC/CUP *and* the Arab advocates of decentralisation, “suggesting that they were agents for European colonial designs on the Ottoman provinces” (DeYoung 2010c, 279–80). Jurjī Zaydān showed a similar reaction. As we saw above, he had admired the Young Turks. Moreover, he “saw in the resurrected Ottoman constitution and the reopened parliament the instruments for holding this multiethnic and multifaitth empire together” (Philipp 2014, 114). However, his sympathies with the Young Turks notwithstanding, only a few months after the coup in an article of April 1909,⁴³ he felt he had to acknowledge that “the Turks and even the members of the Committee for Union and Progress had exercised tyranny over the other people of the empire” and that “the option of separation existed” (Philipp 2014, 115). Nevertheless he still comes to the Sultan’s and the İTC/CUP’s defence when he argues that separatist tendencies in the past were only due to “bad government and suspicion between the ruler and his subjects.” Now, however, “[i]ntelligent Turks, having been exposed to civilised people in Europe and seen how they advocate the tie of patriotism [*al-jāmi‘a al-waṭaniyya*],” have chosen “Ottoman patriotism [*al-jāmi‘a al-‘uthmāniyya*] as their form of solidarity [*‘aṣabiyya*] [...], out of their belief that if they did not do so, their state would be torn apart and collapse” (Zaydān 1909, tr. H. Kilpatrick, in Philipp 2014, 403–04). According to Zaydān, it may indeed look now—after the elections to the new parliament—as if the İTC/CUP was becoming insincere, seeking exclusively *Turkish* privileges; but

we ascribe that not to its [sc. the CUP’s] desire to monopolize power to the detriment of the Arabs or others. [...] The CUP] carried out the acts it is reproached with, out of a desire to maintain the state’s security and in order to protect the Constitution [...]. How dare we blame the CUP [...] for their suspicion of us, since we have not given them proof of our desire to unite with them heart and soul? [...] Apart from supporting the establishment of an Arab league, these Arabs set up the Arab Brotherhood Society in Istanbul. [...] They founded newspapers to defend the Arabs, denigrate the Turks and boast of Arab glory, Arab empires and Arab science. Others wrote articles calling for a Syrian (Arab) union, seeking administrative autonomy [...]. How can the Turks be blamed for their suspicion of the Arabs after that?

(Zaydān 1909, tr. H. Kilpatrick, in Philipp 2014, 404–05)

⁴³ “Al-‘Arab wa-l-Turk qabla l-dustūr wa-ba‘dahū,” *al-Hilāl*, 17 (April 1909): 408–17.

It may be objected that the CUP's autocratic use of power goes against the spirit of the Constitution. But we would reply: how splendid autocracy is, when it is the autocracy of the intelligent and the just! [...] If it is autocratic, its autocracy goes hand in hand with consultation, because it is made up of scores or hundreds of members.

(*ibid.*, 406)

Zaydān therefore proposes to “restrain ourselves and overlook” what may seem, at the moment, as attempts at Turkification; the Arabs should have confidence in “their brothers the Turks” and focus on the “tie of common interest” (Zaydān 1909, tr. H. Kilpatrick, in Philipp 2014, 406). For the patriotic community of all Ottomans is a “community of mutual benefit or usefulness” (Philipp 2014, 115).⁴⁴

1.9 In lieu of a conclusion: Fading loyalty and the Arab revolt

For some time, Zaydān was anything but alone with such an opinion. However, when the İTC/CUP's policy of Turkification intensified in order to extend central control in the provinces (cf. Krämer 1998, 447⁴⁵), this seemed to be too much. Many Arabs may have felt that there was a bitter truth to the old Egyptian proverb saying that “All the thanks you get for serving a Turk (lit., an Oghuz) is a beating”⁴⁶ and that all previous loyalty towards the Turks was to no avail and would not pay out.

It is in this climate that Arab secessionist tendencies gained ground against the previous ‘pan-Ottoman’ imperial nationalism and with British support the Sharif Ḥusayn of Mecca in 1916 “would revolt against Ottoman suzerainty and declare himself the leader of all the Arabs in their struggle for independence from Turkish rule” (DeYoung 2010c, 280). The aim of the revolt was to create an Arab state stretching from Syria to Yemen, which the British had promised to

⁴⁴ Quoting from Zaydān's article “Jāmi‘at al-manfa‘a”, *al-Hilāl*, 19 (Feb 1911): 280–85.

⁴⁵ Krämer here refers to Landau 1994, 9–142, and Khalidi et al., eds. 1991, esp. chs. 2, 3 and 8.

⁴⁶ *ākhir khidmit il-ghuzz ‘alqa* – Badawi and Hinds 1986, s.r. $\sqrt{3}$ yz. – If we are to believe the Egyptian Arabic Wikipedia, the proverb goes back to Mamluk times: “Ghuzz is the colloquial name for the Oghuz, an ethnic group among the Turkish Mamluks. When the Mamluks settled in a[n Egyptian] village, they used to drive its inhabitants out of it, forced them to work for them and serve them, and confiscated their food and drink without paying anything in recompense. When they [then] ended their stay [...], they used to beat the people and mistreat them, out of a desire for harassment and pure chicane [...]”, https://arz.wikipedia.org/wiki/اخر_خدمة_الغز_علقه, as of 24 July 2019 (my translation, S.G.). – For a similar traditional saying, quoted by Nasser in his *Philosophy of the Revolution*, see above, note 4.

recognise. In Tawfīq Yūsuf ‘Awwād’s (1911–89) debut novel, *al-Raghīf* (The Loaf) of 1939 – “the first significant Lebanese novel of the twentieth century” (Starkey 2010, 40) – the Arab revolt is shown in a very positive light. The events unfold during the First World War in a period that

had proved a particularly difficult one for the Lebanese, who had been subject to oppressive measures from the Ottoman authorities under the military governor Jamāl Pāshā, and who had suffered a disastrous famine in which up to one fifth of the population of Mount Lebanon [...] had died of starvation or disease. [...] The hero of the novel [...] is a fervent Arab nationalist [...] who belongs to a secret revolutionary organization devoted to the struggle against Ottoman rule [...] and later leads] the Arab forces in their fight against the Turks. [...] In the course of the troubled events, he loses his life, but the novel nevertheless culminates in] the victorious Arabs enter[ing] Damascus in triumph [...] and] thus win[ning] back for themselves not only their freedom but also the loaf of bread that provides the work with its title.

(Starkey 2010, 39–40)

As Starkey rightly observes, this view is already biased by the experience of the French Protectorate in Greater Syria where it could seem that the former Ottoman yoke only “had been replaced by [...] the French Protectorate” and, thus, “looking back with pride to the struggle against the Ottomans of two decades previously, the work also contained a further relevance for the author’s contemporaries” (Starkey 2010, 40).

Two decades earlier, when the Arab Revolt actually had taken place, comments were often less positive, as, for example, Ma‘rūf al-Ruṣāfi’s poem *Thālith al-thalātha* (The Third of the Three) makes clear. The poem

linked Sharif Ḥusayn to two other Ḥusayns seen as traitors to the Ottoman cause: Ḥusayn al-Kāmil, who accepted the position of Khedive of Egypt when the British declared that country a Protectorate at the beginning of World War I, completely severing it from any ties to the Ottoman Empire [...], and Ḥusayn al-Rushdi Pasha, the Egyptian Prime Minister who had loyally followed his master into the British camp. This satire was so scathing in its denunciation of Sharif Ḥusayn of Mecca that it was only published in truncated form in al-Ruṣāfi’s *Diwan*, with many of the most offensive verses omitted.

(DeYoung 2010c, 280)

As the aftermath of the Arab Revolt shows, al-Ruṣāfi and other critics of the 1917 rebellion certainly had a point – in hindsight, the rebellion helped to pave the way for decades of Anglo-French colonial presence in the region. Nevertheless, and in spite of the many obvious manifestations of the Ottoman past in Arab city architecture – mosques, public fountains, street names, etc. – this past “has hardly left any but unpleasant traces in the collective memory of Arab societies” today, as Reinkowski (2016, 248) observes. Whenever Arab authors of

later decades came to look back to the past with a nostalgic eye, it was certainly not associated with the Ottoman period.⁴⁷ Reinkowski argues that this “amnesia” may be explained as due to ideological necessity in the course of nation building: in order to gain a new present, the past had to be forgotten (ibid., 249). But this is another story...⁴⁸

⁴⁷ There are, for instance, some Alexandria novels in which the cosmopolitan past is remembered with a good deal of nostalgia (e.g., Edward al-Kharrāt's *Turābuhā za'farān*, 1985, translated into English by F. Liardet as *City of Saffron*). But in these, the city's former cosmopolitan character is usually described as the result of its location on the shores of the Mediterranean, with a centuries-old history as a commercial centre, open to the world, a melting-pot whose identity was formed in Old Egyptian, Hellenistic, and Roman times and by Greek and Italian traders and sailors rather than by contact with the Ottomans. As for Cairo, its cosmopolitan history is recalled nostalgically by, e.g., the connoisseur, womanizer and whisky drinker Shawqī “Beğ” al-Dasūqī in ‘Alā’ al-Aswānī's best-selling *Imārat Ya'qūbiān* (2002, translated into English by H. Davies as *The Yacoubian Building*). But here, the memory does not take the reader farther back than to the times when the big building – symbolising Egypt – was erected, in 1934, by its Armenian proprietor, Hagop Yacoubian, i.e., in post-Ottoman times. Neither Shawqī's ‘title’ *beğ* nor the mentioning of the Armenian owner are connected to an Ottoman past in the novel.

⁴⁸ For this, cf. esp. Toledano 2001, whose findings Reinkowski develops further.

2 The simultaneity of the non-simultaneous

The global dimensions of Middle Eastern literature (esp. in the nineteenth century)

First published in *Crossings and Passages in Genre and Culture*,
ed. C. Szyska and F. Pannewick (Wiesbaden 2003), 121–137

This chapter: Chapter 1 showed that, since the middle of the nineteenth century, newly emerged subjectivity in the Arab world went through two main phases: an early one, characterised by self-awareness but still little self-confidence, and a second one in which emerged subjectivity, now matured, began to feel prepared to leave the safe haven of the old Ottoman Empire to start into a new life of national independence. Moreover, we saw that these two phases, the specificity of the Arab(ic) case notwithstanding, also seemed to share features of a more general nature with periods *outside* the Arab world, features that let them appear, and made them describable, as specifications of common *global* developments. This led us to the discovery of “reproductionist” traits (shared with global “Reproductionism” as described by Walter Falk), in the first phase, and more “creativist” aspects (shared with Falk’s global “Creativism”), at the later stage.

The present chapter – originally written almost two decades earlier than the article reproduced in Chapter 1 – takes up and elaborates on several of these same ideas. The overall question is the periodisation of Middle Eastern literary (and other) history and the adequacy and ethics of periodisational terminology.

Let us take the term *Nahḍa* as an example. Used as such, in its Arabic form, as a technical term of Middle Eastern cultural history, it suggests an Arab(ic) idiosyncrasy, something rather specific, peculiar to the Arab world, a period with a temporality of its own. Such an Arab(ic) *Nahḍa* may be compared to the Turkish *Tanzīmāt* or contemporary phenomena in the West, but the choice of an Arabic term would still suggest Arab(ic) specificity. If we, on the other hand, decide to use English terms, like “Renaissance”, “Enlightenment”, or “Modernism”/“Modernity”, we insinuate identity, or at least similarity, with periods of Western cultural history, conjuring up an association of the *Nahḍa* with phenomena from so different periods of European cultural history as the sixteenth, eighteenth, or twentieth centuries, respectively. This sounds strange, but is the *Nahḍa* not comparable to *any* of these? And couldn’t we also speak of the *Nahḍa* as the Arabs’ ‘*Tanzīmāt*’ or of the *Tanzīmāt* as an Ottoman-Turkish ‘*Nahḍa*’? Of course, we could, given that the Arab(ic) *Nahḍa* shares many traits with the Ottoman *Tanzīmāt*, just as it also displays a lot of features that we know from all

the other periods of European cultural history mentioned above. But specialists of the Nahḍa, the Tanẓīmāt, Renaissance, Enlightenment, or Modernism will be quick to protest. Equating the Nahḍa with the other periods is wrong, they will say, it distorts, or even betrays, the significance of established periodisational terminology, because there are at least as many differences between the Nahḍa and the other periods as there are communalities between them. Thus, the price we pay for what we gain by using existing terminology taken from different times and regions – namely, insight into similar traits – is high: we lose as much as we gain. On the other hand, if we refrain from a comparison of the Nahḍa with phenomena from outside the Arab(ic) cultural sphere, the Arab(ic) case seems to remain somehow singular, ‘suspended in the air’, uncomparable to movements or tendencies observable in other cultures.

How then can we account, in terms of periodisational terminology, for the fact that the Arab(ic) Nahḍa is at the same time similar to *and* different from the Tanẓīmāt, the Renaissance, the period of Enlightenment, et cetera, that it has a temporality of its own but takes place simultaneously with events *outside* the Arab world and displays many features that give proof of its ‘modernity’, it’s contemporaneity with ‘global’ movements of its time?

While most of the chapters of the present volume will focus exclusively on the Arab(ic) case, this Chapter 2 reminds us of the benefits of keeping in mind the *simultaneity* of what may seem non-simultaneous (due to the use of periodisational terminology the meaning of which has been pre-defined by its usage for phenomena from different temporal and cultural contexts).

While it seems more confusing than helpful, and also discriminating, if not humiliating, to transfer terms generally used for much *earlier* European periods over to an Arab(ic) context – to call the Nahḍa an Arab(ic) ‘Renaissance’ or ‘Enlightenment’ suggests its lagging behind the corresponding developments in Europe by a century or more –, approaches following Samuel Eisenstadt’s idea of “multiple modernities” seem to be more promising, and also more adequate, doing justice to the fact that both the Nahḍa and the Tanẓīmāt, as well as simultaneous movements in Europe, all are ‘modernities’, each giving its specific answer to the challenges of a world that has started to change radically from the late sixteenth, early seventeenth centuries onwards, that is, the beginning of Modern Times. Each civilisation comes with its own cultural signifiers, but the signified – modernity – is basically identical for all.

However, Falk’s approach – which will be recurred on, or at least referred to, in several of the chapters that are to follow here – goes a step further. It refrains even from the terms ‘modernity’ or ‘Modern Times’, although these would help us to conceive of the Nahḍa as of an Arab(ic) form of a more global multi-

ple modernity. Falk thinks that ‘modernity’ or ‘Modern Times’ not only are still too Eurocentrist to serve as suitable terms for global periods, but also much too unspecific – they cover several centuries of cultural history, and in this way include many periods as their sub-periods, and they tell us little about the actual character of the respective periods of a synchronised “global time” (*Weltzeit* in German).

This is why he decided to create a new periodisational terminology, one that is both culturally neutral and more telling with regard to the specific meanings of the chosen terms. While regarding the *Nahḍa* as a ‘modern’ period allows us to see parallels between Arab(ic) and European ‘modernities’ in general, Falk’s terminology helps us to differentiate “reproductionist” and “creativist” phases within the *Nahḍa* that run parallel to simultaneous reproductionist and creativist phases in other cultural spheres that share with them the same framework of global time. And the terms “Reproductionism” and “Creativism” are more precisely defined than the rather unspecific term ‘modernity’.

* * *

2.1 Introduction

The following contribution is a plea for a new way of ‘reading’ the history of how Middle Eastern literatures have evolved since the nineteenth century.¹ I would outline my main thesis as follows:

It appears to me to be possible to generally describe the processes at work in the literary history of modern Middle Eastern literatures, at least to a certain degree, as a set of particularisations of contemporary *global*² developments. I am convinced that (a) this is the case already since the beginning of the nineteenth century at the latest (and not just since the last few decades of the 20th), and that (b) it is *grosso modo* also possible to place these literatures in *direct* synchrony with the main currents of ‘great’ Western literatures (and not in lagging, staggered phases). This means that these literatures, *despite* manifold and at times very distinct differences in their external appearance, were always just as ‘modern’ as Western literatures, were always ‘up-to-date’, not just with their

¹ For the moment, my starting point are the Arabic and Turkish literature of this period. On the issue of generalisation, see below.

² With the term “global” I am referring to the regions wherein “universal time” operates and holds its validity (see below).

own specific temporalities but with that of ‘universal time’ (*Weltzeit*, a term coined by W. Eberhard). Underpinning this assertion is the assumption that there is a “multilinguism” of modernity (Schulze 2000, 6), one in which “the European dialect of modernity is merely one of many cultural dialects of modernity” (ibid.).

Within the confines of the space available here it is of course impossible from the outset to provide comprehensive theoretical and textual support for this thesis. Nevertheless, I hope to be able to give some convincing arguments and indications that will show that this thesis is not fully without substance.

I view the relevance of my thesis for the problematic dealt with in this volume³ as being concentrated in three points:

- *Interculturality and Interaction*: It is my view that the concepts ‘interculturality’ and ‘interaction’ are only suitable for describing so-called ‘genetic’ relations between literatures, i.e., those springing forth from *direct* exchange. They are not useful for grasping parallels that emerge *without* directly exerted influence or interaction. We can also only operate with the term ‘intertextuality’ in a limited way in these cases. In addition, as it is employed today, the prefix *inter-* suggests a reciprocity, a giving and taking performed by *both* sides (whereas between the modern Middle Eastern and Western literatures reception occurred mainly in one single direction – Western literatures hardly took any notice of developments in their Middle Eastern counterparts). Furthermore, whenever we view a phenomenon under the aspect of ‘interculturality’ – ‘culture’ understood here as a sign system – our interest is normally more directed towards the signified than towards the signifiers; or, ‘culture’ understood as ‘language’, we are more concerned with the level of *parole* than with that of *langue*. Taking part in modernity is, however, independent of signifiers; the same signified can be expressed in different cultures through different signifiers. As I will attempt to show, the alterity of phenomena of literary cultures does not exclude participation in the same kind of (or at least very similar) processes: time did not pass, nor does it pass, any slower in the ‘Orient’, nor in line with another framework, even if it appears to be different or the hands of the clocks are supposed to move anti-clockwise – what is measured and displayed is a *Weltzeit*, universal time.

3 [The “volume” referred to here is *Crossings and Passages in Genre and Culture*, ed. C. Szyska and F. Pannewick (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2003), where this chapter was first published as an article.]

- *Intertextuality*: The present essay would like to place for once the temporal dimension in the concept of ‘intertextuality’ at the centre of attention and heighten sensitivity for the problem of periodisation as an important aspect in intertextuality (understood in the broad sense of a relationship between systems of texts).
- *Genre*: Closely tied to the concept of ‘modernity’, characterising an epoch and in this way directly addressing the issue of periodisation, are the concepts of genre. Above all the ‘novel’, as the ‘modern’ genre *par excellence*, has until now frequently been seen as a Western invention that then ‘spread’ further. However, the idea of the global nature of literary history processes, and so also of modernity, demands a modification of this notion.

I will first offer a short sketch of how I have reached this thesis, namely through a comparison between two national literatures. Then I will follow with my arguments for a rethink and, to conclude, offer some thoughts on the possible consequences such a rethinking may generate on various levels.

2.2 Starting point: two Middle Eastern literatures compared

A comparative view of the history of Arabic and (Ottoman) Turkish novels, such as I have pursued for some time now,⁴ brings to light countless shared features in the most divergent of areas – despite the particularities which certainly do exist and shall in no way be denied. From the profusion of congruences I will present just a few examples, concentrating on the nineteenth century, the main focus of our interest because it is commonly depicted as the age when modernity began ‘belatedly’ in the ‘Orient’.

Correspondence (in the depiction) of the general lines of development from the nineteenth century to the present. A look at standard references of ‘national’ literary history shows that similar periods marked by similar breaks are employed when describing the development of both Arabic as well as Turkish literature(s) during the last one and a half centuries. One model (Ostle 1991) establishes three “ages” (also considered applicable to Persian literature): 1850–1914; 1914–1950; and from 1950 onwards. In the meantime, a further break located around 1980 would also probably find general agreement. All the histories of ‘modern’ literature in the Middle East that I am familiar with locate the start of

⁴ [The result of this “pursuit” was my post-doctoral thesis, published in 2003 under the title *Brückenschläge* (Building Bridges); see Bibliography.]

literary modernity in the region with translations of and adaptations from works written in European languages, and all view the nineteenth century in the first instance as a period of *reception* of European patterns (Ostle's model thus entitles the entire era prior to the First World War as "The Age of Translation and Adaptation"). In both literatures the new prose genres and theatre begin to develop during this period. Overall the nineteenth century is portrayed for both literatures with little internal division. For Arabic narrative prose hardly any break is seen until around 1900, for the Turkish around 1880, if at all – but even here this break only marks the rise of the first 'more mature' local works produced by authors 'better versed' in their craft, and for which the preceding decades had served as it were as an apprenticeship. It is the common view of historians of both Arabic and Turkish literature that the 'immaturity' of the bulk of literature in this first phase is mainly due to its didactic nature (it is largely used as a medium for enlightenment and moral instruction as well as for propagating reformist ideas) and its entertainment character (so as to be able to keep up and survive in an age of increased competition in the arena of the private press, which had become the main medium for the new generation of authors, there was pressure to adapt to the taste of a broad public who longed for adventure, romance and detective novels and their shallow, sensational and sentimental distraction; hence, a great deal of European, mainly French, serial novels were translated and/or adapted – in both Arabic and Turkish often the same authors, even the same works –, and in this way many of their own creations rely far more on the 'low', popular narrative traditions as on the 'high' aesthetic style of classical prose). So as to counter a decay into populism, a number of authors emphasise anew the character of literature as *art*; some of them argue (albeit from time to time with certain concessions) in favour of maintaining the highly rhetoricised, and hence elitist, traditional style; others propagate an increased orientation towards Western models considered high quality in terms of their content and narrative techniques. As a whole, the first phase presents itself as a "lutte entre les deux courants 'occidentalisant' et 'orientalisant' (= conservateur)" (so Akyüz 1964, 509, for the Turkish) or, somewhat more differentiated, as an age in which four directions critical of the still prevailing old tradition are formed, "emotionalism, naturalism, neo-classicism and rationalism" (Hamarnéh 1998, 231, for the Arabic). Following the usual historical accounts, modernism, and with it also the *courant occidentalisant*, ultimately beats concurring 'traditional' leanings. In Turkey, the works of the *Şervet-i Fünûn* group (1896–1901) are considered to be the definitive turning point,⁵ in Arabic litera-

5 Cf. Akyüz 1964, 509: "La littérature turque a, en effet, acquis, à la fin de cette période assez

ture Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī's *Ḥadīth 'Īsā b. Hishām*, published at around the same time (1898 ff.), is generally seen as the “swan-song of classical literature” (Brockelmann/Pellat 1986, 113). Between the turn of the century and the First World War both literatures then develop quite similar conceptions for the creation of a “national literature” (Ar. *adab qawmī*, Turk. *millî edebiyât*).⁶ In both instances, national literature orientates itself formally on Western models; at the same time, however, it calls for authentic themes and local characters and settings. Furthermore, this national literature is at first seen in connection with the national uprisings and struggles for independence from Western subordination, and advocated with patriotic enthusiasm. Ostle lets the second main phase in the history of modern Middle Eastern literatures begin with this ‘romantic nationalism’. After the disillusionment in the first years of independence, in the interwar period, an increasingly critical realism develops, one aimed at the ruling powers but also self-critical. During and after the Second World War this critical realism then turns into ‘social criticism’. In contrast to ‘Romanticism’,⁷ in which the problems facing individuals (repeatedly an alter ego of the educated author) in a backward society stand in the foreground, the scope of social realism of both literatures opens up so as to include more general problems, the reason why longer texts now frequently seek to present panoramas of the whole of society. Even when now and then characterised by differing emphasis,⁸ social realism becomes dominant from the 1950s onwards, although ‘Neo-Romantic’ currents come to life in both. From around the middle of the 1960s realism in both literatures experiences its first crisis: the view of reality held until now is questioned in so far as there no longer appears to be anything solid, secure or constant. Having completely lost their bearings, authors now seek to find new ground under their feet. Together with the prevailing political conditions the dominant literature with its mimetic approach is condemned and discarded.

courte, mais pleinement consacrée à une activité intense et dynamique, un caractère exclusivement occidental, tant par son contenu que par sa technique”. [For an example of the literature of this group – Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil's *Aşk-ı Memnu* – and for a discussion of the ‘place’ of the *Şervet-i Fünûn* group in literary history, see below, Chapter 18.]

6 [See above, Chapter 1, end of introductory section “This chapter”, where the shift to a literature of independent nations is seen in relation to Walter Falk's “Creativist” period.]

7 The term ‘Romanticism’ is used above all in the context of Arabic literature (e.g. for Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān or Muşţafā Luţfī al-Manfalūṭī); but there are also corresponding currents in Turkish literature [see, e.g., below, Chapters 15 and 19.3. on R. N. Güntekin's *Çalıkuşu*].

8 In Arabic literature rural themes are certainly taken up; by and large, however, the novels continue to be set in the big cities. In contrast, a so-called “village literature” (*köy edebiyatı*) develops in Turkish literature.

The literature of ‘New Sensibility’⁹ or ‘New Inwardness’¹⁰ go beyond the established socially-critical realism by incorporating into their concept of realism new, previously ignored and often also hushed up *other* realities, ones placed under a taboo, including those from dreams and myths. Writing assumes extremely innovative, avant-garde, experimental features, at times entering the surreal and the fantastic. Into the 1970s writing nevertheless still has a political function for many intellectuals: they believe that they are able to ‘bring about change’, to ‘get somewhere’ with their causes.¹¹ Since around 1980, however, a general abstinence from commitment to social criticism or a political cause is evident both in Turkey and Arab countries. In both cases this stems from a radically deconstructionist attitude that frequently includes the loss of individual identity, i.e., the destruction of the self, the basis for blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction, if not at times abolishing them completely.¹² – A rapid survey of 150 years of literary history can of course only mark the most general lines of development and indicate Arabo-Turkish correspondences. And yet, even when we ‘zoom in’ somewhat closer, congruences can still be found in the most divergent of aspects. A few random examples, especially from the second half of the nineteenth century, may suffice to illustrate this:

Genre hierarchy: In both Arabic and Turkish literature, narrative prose only slowly gained the status of recognised ‘literature’. Prior to that, poetry and a poeticised (i.e., highly rhetoricised and embellished) prose alone could claim to possess the qualities of good literature, while story-telling was regarded merely as a popular “folk activity” (Cachia 1990, 105). To abandon decorative language was at first almost unthinkable, it would have been something almost obscene.¹³ Later, the function of the ‘elegant’ style altered: “The demands of style were not forgotten, but the effects now sought were not ornamental but emotional”, writes Cachia (1990, 105), formulating one of the most important shifts to occur in the transition to modern literature. Parallel to this shift, the “loss of poetic value sedimented in form” incurred by the transition to prose was compensated

⁹ *ḥassāsiyya jadida*: an expression from Edward al-Kharrāṭ (and already prior to him Ṣabri Ḥafīz) referring to Arabic literature.

¹⁰ *Neue Innerlichkeit*: Kappert 1985, 642 f., for Turkish literature.

¹¹ Cf. the designation of the third main phase (since 1950) as “The Age of Ideology and Polarization” in Ostle 1991.

¹² For a survey of Arabic and Turkish fiction under this specific aspect cf. my “Individuality lost, fun gained”, i.e., Guth 2007a.

¹³ For the Turkish context, cf., e.g., Dino 1960, 572–3: “Le dépouillement des termes [...] choque l’écrivain turc; cette nudité, pour ainsi dire, du mot, il lui faut l’habiller, la rendre présentable à son public”.

for by dealing with “particularly ‘poetic’ material” (Wilpert 1979, s.v. “Roman”), like love, the blows of destiny, etc.¹⁴ Gradually, poetry lost its reputation, and among the novelists ‘populists’ became differentiated from ‘artists’ (see below). The novel and the short story prised themselves free from the forms they were previously closely tied to (traditional autochthonous genres such as *hikāye*, *risāla*, *maqāma*, but also the essayistic *maqāla* / (*baş*) *makale*).

The role of the author: The authors of the nineteenth century in Arab regions as well as in the core countries of the Ottoman Empire saw themselves as enlighteners whose task it was to reform society, as ‘engineers’ who had the knowledge to repair the broken ‘social structure’ (*al-hay’a al-ijtimā’iyya*), or ‘doctors’ who could cure the ‘body’ of this society from ‘diseases’. Here, prose became the main means of expression for the ‘teachers of the nation’.

Social contexts: Within the changing literary landscape of the nineteenth century, each of the existing genres can be ascribed to a specific social group in both the Arabic and Turkish domains. Generally speaking, in both cases prose stands for a stratum of society that had been educated in the institutions newly created in the first decades of the nineteenth century and were now working in the new ‘secular’ institutions.

Moreover, Arabic-Turkish correspondence extends even to the *smallest details* in a countless number of cases. For example, there are heroes with almost identical profiles; there are almost identical character constellations, basic plot structures, thematic and stylistic congruencies, and so on. And these are not just congruencies between ‘freely floating’ elements; they also fulfil at the same time the same functions within the whole, i.e., they are systemic congruents.¹⁵ (This is important, for in order to assign two texts or literatures to one and the same period, they must fulfil the condition of systemic congruence because periods are *systems* of meaning (whose components interrelate in a specific way).)

Based on these and many other features shared by Arabic and Turkish literature over more than one and a half centuries, it appears possible, and indeed also very meaningful, to view both histories of the novel as belonging together.

¹⁴ Original German: “die Einbuße an dichterischer Werthaltigkeit in der Form [...] durch besonders ‘poetische’ Stoffe auszugleichen”.

¹⁵ Cf. in this regard my individual case studies: Guth 1994 (juxtaposing Orhan Pamuk’s *Sessiz Ev*, written 1980–83, published 1983, and ‘Abduh Gubayr’s *Tahrir al-qalb*, written 1977–79, published 1982), Guth 1996 (comparing Şun’allah İbrāhīm’s *al-Lajna*, 1981, and Orhan Pamuk’s *Kara Kitap*, 1990), and Guth 2000 (R. N. Güntekin’s *Çalığışu*, 1922, and M. H. Haykal’s *Zaynab*, 1913). – [For a large-scale study of Arabic-Turkish parallels, cf. my postdoctoral thesis, *Brückenschläge* (Building Bridges) = Guth 2003b.]

It goes without saying that this does not mean that viewing them as individual literatures, with their respective specificity and ‘individuality’, is no longer meaningful and necessary. It only means that, on an overarching level, a level *above* the ideo-syncretasies of ‘national’ literatures, there is obviously a level of more general and not less real facts and relations that are worth considering, not just due to their abundance, but also because of their higher degree of general validity. This is indispensable precisely also for the individual national-philological perspectives: the features and contours of the specific can, after all, be thoroughly and deeply understood only in their relationship to something general against which it strives to contrast itself and stand out.

2.3 How general are the shared features?

The question that arises at this point is: what precisely is the nature of the level we have arrived at by abstracting the specific features of the individual ‘national’ literatures, and which degree of general validity have we reached on this level? Is the evidence gathered only valid for the – obviously closely related – pair of Arabic and Turkish literatures, or is it also applicable to other literatures, and if so, to which?

One assumption seems to suggest itself immediately here: features shared by Arabic and Turkish literary history might be describable as the result of a belonging of both to the literary tradition of a larger *region* where all pertinent members share the multi-faceted heritage (political, economic, social, cultural, historical, etc.).¹⁶ We would then be dealing with a literary-cultural unit which is determined territorially by the borders of the Ottoman Empire (incl. its Arab provinces) resp. those of its successor states and whose specific nature must be explainable through exclusively Arabo-Turkish conditions not shared with any other literature. This seems to make little sense, however, for even a fleeting view of the development of modern *Persian* literature shows that here, too, many similarities are to be noted, similarities which run temporally parallel.¹⁷ Poetry and the poeticising style were first of all dominant here as well; here, too,

¹⁶ Until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire other forms of influence, contact and relations between authors or groups may also be considered. From 1923 at the latest, however, a so-called ‘genetic’ comparison is no longer tenable, and even before 1923 it seems more accurate to interpret these similarities ‘typologically’ and rather than ‘genetically’.

¹⁷ For information on modern Persian literature see, in addition to the entry mentioned in the next footnote, the two short surveys by Rahnama 1988/92, esp. 534–6, and Haag-Higuchi 2001. – For more detailed surveys, cf. Meisami 1991 and Katouzian 1991.

'modern' prose literature developed from a complex background of traditional 'folk' narrative, other forms of 'higher' literary prose that flourished in the nineteenth century, and translations from European languages; here, too, does the 'vernacular' become accepted gradually as part of literature after initially only finding hesitant use; here, too, was a 'national literature' movement demanding a literature close to the common people and speaking the "language of the everyday and about the everyday" (Krüger 1974, 41), and a subsequent phase of disillusionment with the formation of a socially critical realism in the period between the Wars, and so on and so on – congruencies abound, and there is no point in dealing with them in more detail here.

If the characteristics gained through the abstraction from Arabic and Turkish literature are also valid for Persian literature, are we then dealing with a type of literature that we should sensibly call 'pan-Oriental', or at least 'Middle Eastern'?

For sure, such a label would have a *certain* justification, as specific phenomena that in many respects can be explained as results of a joint Middle Eastern literary tradition and a joint 'Islamic' history, cannot be found in literatures that do *not* share this same tradition (e.g., a specific metaphoric language, references to the Koran, common references such as the *Majnūn Laylā* plot, etc.). A further argument which until now was used to explain the difference between a modern Middle Eastern literature and other, in particular European, literatures was its relative 'belatedness': whereas Europe had already passed through the epoch of Enlightenment in the 18th century, the common accounts of Middle Eastern literary history posited a period of 'Enlightenment' in the 'Orient' not before the middle of the nineteenth century; literary Romanticism, in the West a phenomenon of the early nineteenth century, first settled in the 'Orient' at the end of the nineteenth and in early 20th century; European realism first found its eastern 'imitator' three quarters of, or even a whole, century later; etc. Only very recently has this notion of the 'latecomers' constantly 'lagging behind' behind Western 'forerunners' and 'masters' made way for a recognition of equal achievement (mainly based on the 'authenticity' and 'original fantasy' of 'typically Oriental' story-telling).

This view (according to which the Western epochs not only arrived with considerable delay in the 'Orient', but also took place there in temporal compression, condensedly, i.e., much quicker and, on top of everything, mostly understood only superficially and emulated syncretistically) certainly also has a *certain* justification. Many phenomena, including the novelistic genre, did indeed make their debut in the 'Orient' much later than in the West and then showed specific 'hybrid' 'deformations'. And yet, such a view is also quite inad-

equate – in two respects. First, the ‘belatedness’ (as compared to the ‘main literatures’ of the West) and in this context also the replacement of an autochthonous and ‘traditional’ narrative tradition with a ‘modern’, Western-type one, is not specific to Middle Eastern literatures. As *postcolonial studies* have shown, Middle Eastern literatures share this with numerous other literatures from non-European countries whose history has been shaped by colonialism (or quasi-colonialism, as in Turkey). But they also share this with many ‘smaller’ European literatures that developed on the margins (and in the shadow) of the great main literatures, for example with those in the Balkans or in Scandinavia; it has even been claimed that a belatedness of some decades behind the processes at work in the West is the fate of one of the ‘great’ literatures, too – Russian literature. Seen in this light, it appears more meaningful to assign a great portion of the congruencies in Turkish and Arabic literary history not to a ‘Middle Eastern’, but rather to a more general typology of ‘marginal’ literatures, with its own laws of development and periods.

But this view too does not quite do justice to the empirical facts. Traditional comparative literature (that is studies limited to European and Northern American literatures) already makes clear how problematic the construction of an alterity of ‘marginal’ literatures is, for a non-simultaneity of the simultaneous, an anachronism or a hybridisation cannot be stated for all phenomena one encounters when comparing ‘marginal’ to ‘central’ literatures: rather, these literatures participate directly in many developments, without any ‘staggered phases’ behind those of the ‘great’ literatures. Why, then, should this not be the case in the ‘Orient’, too? Is the idea of a belatedness of the ‘Oriental’ literatures not simply due to the persistence of the old ‘Orientalist’ construction of the ‘Orient’ as the ‘Other’? And has this construction of the ‘Orient’ as the essentially ‘Other’ not also obstructed a comparison between not just surface phenomena (= signifiers) but also meanings (= sets of signifieds), i.e., an investigation into their functions within the periods at stake?

2.4 The global dimension

That there could also be a level of participation of Middle Eastern literatures in global developments, from the nineteenth century onwards at least, and *without* staggered phases, appears probable given the simple fact that the Middle East had by then already been closely integrated into global developments *politically*

and *economically* for a long time.¹⁸ And in the spheres of *cultural achievements* and *civilisation*, too, Istanbul or Cairo were hardly lagging behind Paris, London, Berlin or Vienna: one only needs to consider contemporary urban architecture, the parks, the hotels and theatres then built; the opera houses with their almost identical programmes; institutions such as the *café dansant*; or the literary salons. Moreover, Arab and Turkish authors of 'modern' narrative prose also graduated from similar educational institutions in their homeland (or, if they had gone to study in Europe, even the same ones) as their 'Western' colleagues, and in addition to their own 'traditional' literary canon they engaged with and absorbed the same literary canon as their European contemporaries, though perhaps not to the same extent.

Indeed, parallels to the prevailing contemporary conditions in the West are to be found in abundance in the Middle East, not just in the *contexts* shaped by global developments that surrounded literature, but also in the *texts* themselves, both on the surface as well as in their deep structures. That the literature of the 'Orient' is tied into a global discursive community and not so backwardly 'Oriental' and underdeveloped, is, for example, already quite obvious, on the surface level, from the fact that certain fashions are followed as a matter of course. The motif of 'death through consumption', for instance, is found in contemporary Western texts as well as in Turkey and Egypt. The fact that in several works of the *Edebiyat-ı Cedide* group (end-nineteenth century) a conspicuous number of tragic figures die of tuberculosis made literary critics playfully label the literary production of the group as *verem edebiyatı* "literature of consumption"; and in Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's *Zaynab* (1913) the title heroine dies – after a long and painful suffering – from this very same illness. Such sentimentalism has until now been smiled at and dismissed as something that contemporary sophisticated literature in the West had long overcome. This may in part be true; yet it should not be overlooked, firstly, that in the literary output of the West during the *fin de siècle* and the period prior to the First World War, there are many highly sentimental, 'emotional' texts that very much 'go to the heart', even among those canonised as 'good' literature. Secondly, all too frequently such judgements are comparing apples with pears. When, for example, a large part of the literature produced by Middle Eastern authors during the second half of the nineteenth century is made up of more or less shallow love, adventure, detective, historical and other novels, above all *entertaining* as well as *moralis-*

¹⁸ Cf. Schulze 1998, where a retelling of Islamic history as part of world history is attempted already from the 16th century onwards ("provisionally" using *Western* periodizational terminology).

ing-edifying, it is wrong to contrast these texts with something more sophisticated and complex in narrative technique from European literature than what they themselves strove to be: namely simply serial novels that did not even claim to be of high literary quality.¹⁹ When the texts which fascinated a mass public in contemporary France or England were translated into Arabic or Turkish or adapted to suit the local conditions, or when such fashions served as orientation for their own production, then the ‘Orient’ was in no way different, for example, to Germany where works that had proven to be best-sellers abroad [such as those by Ch. P. de Kock (1794–1871), F. Soulié (1800–1847), E. Sue (1804–1857), Jules Verne (1828–1905), J.-H. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737–1814), father and son A. Dumas (1802–1870 and 1824–1895, respectively), D. Defoe (1660–1731), Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823) or Walter Scott (1771–1832)]²⁰ got translated soon after their original publication, and local texts of the same style appeared. And just as it was well known in Germany that these serial novels were not literature of a particularly high quality, they were attached little aesthetic value in the ‘Orient’, too: literary ‘beauty’ was something completely different from this commercial prose. Therefore, either we ascribe modernity also to the ‘Orient’ in this regard, or we must likewise deprive ‘imitators’ such as Germany of their always presupposed modernity.

It is, of course, not necessarily *Western* European literature with which a correspondence has to exist in order to pass as ‘modern’. A motif such as that of the unreflected, merely superficial adoption of Western fashions, equally characteristic of Arabic and Turkish literature of the second half of the nineteenth century (in the one we have the *mutafarnij*, in the other the *alafranga züppe*, both translatable as “Euromanica” or “Euro-Freak”), is naturally not to be found in French, English or German texts. But we only need to look at another ‘great’ literature – Russian – to find the same motif with very similar connotations: at the end of the novel *Oblomov* (1859) by Ivan Goncharov (1812–1891), for exam-

19 Most of the authors understood themselves in the first instance as “public moralists”, a term used by Al-Bagdadi 1999b for the Arab authors; it is, however, just as applicable to Turkish authors. Accordingly, the Ottoman Ahmed Midhat “once denied having written anything ‘which may be called literary.’ He described his goal as having been ‘to address the majority, to illuminate them and to try to be an interpreter for their problems’”: Evin 1983, 81 (with quotations from Kemal Yazgı, *Ahmet Mithat Efendi*, 1940, 24). Cf. also Midhat’s statements on the (non-) artistic character of his work cited in Kudret 1987, i:37–38. – Jurji Zaydān, too, did not regard his historical novels as good literature, in the first place, but rather “sometimes as popularized history [...], sometimes as ‘entertainment’”: Cachia 1990, 83.

20 A survey of the translations of these authors into Turkish can be found in Strauss 1994, into Arabic in Khoury 1965?) and Nuşayr 1990.

ple, the lethargic title hero is compared to the main figure from a contemporary comedy, a figure who is the symbol of “a Russia that has merely donned a Western cloak, but in its inner remains uneducated, unreformed and immovable” (Rothe 1987, 154; my translation). This Russia is characterised by Goncharov in a way similar to how Arab and Turkish reformers of the nineteenth century judge the situation prevailing in *their* countries:

The norms of life were finished and handed down to them [the inhabitants of the small village Oblomovka, the symbol of an idyllic, ideal Russia] by their parents, and they had them, also finished, from the grandfather, and the grandfather from the great-grandfather, with the bequest to keep them just as intact and untouched as the flame of Vesta.

(Gontscharow 1987, 70)²¹

But I wanted to search for indications of the contemporaneity of ‘Oriental’ literatures and their participation in global developments not just on the surface of texts. It needs to be considered – only the construction of the ‘Orient’ as the ‘Other’ had obstructed this thought for so long – that modernity could also possibly express itself differently than in European clothes, that literatures could thus be just as modern *although* they appear in forms taking up autochthonous traditions, utilise other styles and thus ‘speak another language’.

Here is not the place to deal with the basis of the methodological approach I regard as being the most helpful in providing convincing proof of congruencies in the way how life is experienced and perceived as ‘meaningful’ in any given period. Nevertheless, it is a fact that an application of the so-called *componential analysis*,²² developed by the late Walter Falk (Marburg, †2000), on Arabic and Turkish texts repeatedly allows us to recognise their affiliation to the same systems of meaning referred to by contemporary European texts. This is not just the case for more recent times,²³ and not just for the 20th century (cf. Falk 1984; see also Guth 1994), but rather, as I have been able to show on a number of test cases, also for the nineteenth century.²⁴ One example may suffice to illustrate this.

²¹ Russian: *Norma žizni byla gotova i prepodana im roditeljami, a te prinjali eë, tože gotovuju, ot deduški, a deduška ot prededuški, s zavetom bljusti eë celost' i neprikosnovennost', kak ogon' Vesty.*

²² The theory's ‘classical’ manual is Falk 1983 (new ed. 1996).

²³ Cf. my “Individuality lost, fun gained” [Guth 2007a] (on some recurrent motifs of novels from Turkey, the Maghrib and the Mashriq, of the 1980s and 1990s).

²⁴ For an earlier analysis of a *late* nineteenth century Turkish novel, cf. Guth 1997a [= Chapter 18 in the present volume].

In Khalil al-Khūrī's novel *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji* ("Oh dear, so I'm not a European after all!", 1859/60)²⁵ the overall meaning is structured²⁶ into

- an Actuality determined by what the author calls *wujūd ahlī*, the "local way of being there" or "indigenous way of life"; under this category the author resumes of the old-fashioned mores, dress codes, ways of life, etc., and, in this text particularly, the well-established practice of marrying daughters to a male member of the extended family;
- a Potentiality whose main element is the conceited wish of the 'Euromanic' Mikhā'il to elevate himself above his fellow countrymen by imitating European lifestyle, in particular his attempt to leave behind the despised cultural identity by marrying his daughter Émilie to a Frenchman and so overcome the *wujūd ahlī* for something allegedly better and more cultivated;
- a Resultant consisting of the very painful recognition of the insurmountability of the naturally given identity and a regretful insight into the positive aspects of the *wujūd ahlī*.

With this componential structure al-Khūrī's text clearly illustrates the same type of experiencing the meaning of existing in the world as can be observed in German literature between 1820 and 1880, although their textual surface naturally comes with very different appearances (different themes, plots, styles, etc.). Falk summarized their structures in the following 'period formula':

- Actuality – The general and the lawful, dominating in space
 Potentiality – The specific and the unique, tending towards renewal
 Resultant – The individualised reproduction of the general²⁷

(Falk 1984, 31)

That the components of al-Khūrī's text can be understood as individual specifications of this more general, global²⁸ system of meaning is in my view evident.

²⁵ For more detail on this novel, see Wielandt 1980, esp. 130–136; Guth 2003b, 10–47 (compared with a contemporary Turkish text), and Chapter 4 in the present volume.

²⁶ For the underlying theory of the trinary structure of 'meaning' and the corresponding method of literary analysis cf. Falk (1983, 2nd ed. 1996). The terms 'actuality' and 'potentiality' should not be confused with the concepts of *actu/ἐνεργία* 'in fact' and *potentiā/δυνάμει* 'in possibility' by which Aristotelian hylemorphism refers to the givenness of οὐσία in formed vs. unformed matter.

²⁷ Original German wording: "AK: Das Allgemeine und Gesetzhafte, herrschend im Raum; PK: Das Besondere und Einzigartige, tendierend zur Erneuerung; RK: Die individualisierende Reproduktion des Allgemeinen".

[For further examples of Middle Eastern texts sharing ‘global’ componential structures, cf. below, Chapters 8 and 18].

Component Analysis has the great advantage of being able to reveal the ‘deep structures’ of a period that otherwise remain concealed under often completely differing textual surfaces. If a sharing of the *essentially similar* world experience and ‘universal time’ can be conceived as possible, it is also possible to search for more specifically *literary* congruencies (even though these may still be very much of a general nature). As the following two examples may show, such parallels can be found on the most divergent of levels (these will conclude my collection of evidence).

The most important current of European literature following Romanticism is Realism. Falk has described Realism as the style in which the general experience of meaning between around 1820 and 1880, sketched above, manifests itself in the *arts* (in *politics*, it is expressed in the “law-abiding restoration or conformist progressivism, in the *sciences* as positivism” – Falk 1983, 160–161; my translation). Parallelling the ‘Oriental’ nineteenth century with European ‘Enlightenment’ has until now left no room for an Middle Eastern ‘Realism’ in the nineteenth century. According to the usual view, Realism could emerge in the ‘Orient’ only after the region had passed through the phases of a cultural (incl. literary) development, which, in line with the allegedly general laws of Evolution, would follow the stage of ‘Enlightenment’. ‘Realism’ was therefore never imagined as possible in the ‘Orient’ before the 20th century, or at the end of the nineteenth century at the earliest. A more impartial view, however, could identify numerous elements indicating a tendency towards Realism already in the ‘Oriental’ nineteenth century. The propagation of ‘clear’, comprehensible prose stripped of rhetorical devices, for example, is not just a phenomenon of Enlightenment, but contains also a realist component: such a language is needed as an instrument for achieving a detailed registration, an exact description and a sharp analysis of the conditions demanding reform. Meanwhile, a number of texts (particularly in Arabic) still utilises the old style while trying to produce a similar assessment of the prevailing situation; they attempt to reach scientific precision and detail on the language level by reactivating the rich vocabulary of

²⁸ Falk had initially abstracted the component categories from *German* texts, but then tested their validity for non-German texts and subsequently postulated their “universality”. I prefer the term ‘global’ for I do not see any metaphysical force at work here, rather only a supra-regional discourse community, one though that neither covers the whole world nor all strata of society (cf. n. 2 above).

the classical language, which they consider to have become stunted in the period of 'decline'. The hitherto highly valued metaphoric mode of expression is strictly limited in both its 'higher' and 'lower' style; what was known as a fixed metaphor (especially in Ottoman Divan literature) now goes through a 'renaturalisation', i.e., expressions become divested of their metaphorical meaning; for example, the 'moon' now indeed refers to the moon and not to the face of the lover; literature now serves (the description of) reality, whereas before that, reality (as a reservoir for similes, metaphors etc.) had served literature. The trouble taken to describe and explain the given reality can even be observed in the so-called 'folk literature': already in some stories told by the professional café storytellers from around the middle of the century there are passages – very unusual for a genre previously only concerned with 'action' – in which persons are characterised, rooms described and landscapes painted. This occurs to an even more extensive degree in novels, where the human psyche is included now as a topic for observation, description, analysis and scientific explanation. Everybody was careful to not to write what might be unrealistic or improbable (whereby 'improbable' merely means 'free of logical contradictions and the supernatural fantastical') and everyone kept hold on what was above all known and familiar in the reader's life-world (even though frequently presented in sensationalist and/or sentimental form). History belonged here, too, which is why, for example, Jurjī Zaydān's historicising romances, despite all their invented adventures and melodramatic plots, should be classified as *realistic*, if not outright *naturalistic*. – With all these features the Arabic and Turkish texts demonstrate, although certainly not in every respect, how the authors took a fundamentally *scientistic* approach to the world, one also characteristic of the European realists of the same age.

A last piece of evidence supporting an interpretation of phenomena in Middle Eastern literatures as part of global processes is the development towards an idea of the autonomy of art, as represented by the *Servet-i Fünûn* group in Turkey before the turn of the century. Using as an example shifts in the genre landscape, I will compare this group with parallel developments favouring this idea in France.²⁹ The emphasis on the intrinsic value of aesthetics in contrast to an economic value was preceded in France, as in Turkey, by strong expansion in the literature market during the second half of the nineteenth century, in both cases triggered by factors such as new printing techniques and the extension of school education from around 1860 onwards. This led mainly to an expansion of

²⁹ In the following I will use Jurt 1995, 153 ff., as my reference for French literature. Jurt summarises here studies by Rémy Ponton and Christophe Charle.

the novel, because it was the novel that could satisfy the needs of the new, greatly extended reading public. Complementary to this advancing popularisation of literature, there arose a counter-movement in both France and Turkey, first of all in the domain of *poetry*.³⁰ Poetry certainly no longer yielded anything economically, but still enjoyed a high level of symbolic status in both countries. Therefore, the poets of French Symbolism, for instance, were able to therefore reject the novel as being at the mercy of the market, just as in the 'Orient' numerous advocates of the poeticising old 'high' style turned against the 'decline of literature' caused by its increased popularisation. The novelists, for their part, in both countries attempted to enhance the subordinate position of their genre and to assert themselves against the poeticisers, whether it be through an increased embellishment of their own prose style, through intensifying *qua* emotionalisation³¹ or through ascribing to renowned categories *external* to literature: Balzac sometimes called his novels *études de mœurs*, at other times *études philosophiques* or *études analytiques*, and Zola lent his novels legitimacy not by appealing to aesthetic categories, but rather by comparing (in 1868) his novel-writing to the analytical dissection performed by a surgeon, in this way presenting himself as a scientist. Turkish (and also Arab) authors did exactly the same. They, too, no longer saw themselves as being primarily storytellers or artists performing with language; rather, as for example Aḥmed Midḥat in 1880, they thought of themselves as someone whose task it was to *describe* specific ways of behaviour and to *explain* the circumstances responsible for it, for the gain in reading for the reader would reside in their *understanding* of life and the course of events (i.e., in rational comprehensibility);³² even prior to this, in a novel such as Nāmīk Kemāl's *İntibāh* (1876), it is striking how frequently the word "dissect" (*teşrīh*) occurs (cf. Dino 1973, 93–4); and in 1892, Sāmīpaşazāde Sezā'ī defined the art of the novelist as the "science (!) of literary explanation".³³ A further differentiation and specialisation then follows within the sphere of the novel itself. In the 1880s, a rift opens up between the psychologists and naturalists in France, a process that definitely has its counterpart in Turkey (though until now not yet perceived as a parallel). Although the French psychologists

30 In the case of France, it was especially *lyrical* poetry.

31 "The demands of style were not forgotten, but the effects now sought were not ornamental but emotional", writes Cachia 1990, 50, on Arabic literature, in this way describing one of the most important shifts which occurred – also in Turkish – in the transition to 'modern' literature.

32 Aḥmed Midḥat 1880, in no. 1 of the journal *Şark*, quoted in Özkırımlı 1987, iv: 994.

33 Sāmīpaşazāde Sezā'ī in the preface to his collection of stories, *Küçük Şeyler* (1892), quoted in Özkırımlı 1987, iv:994.

are opponents of the ever-advancing popularisation of literature (and even if they come from the same upper classes as previously the advocates of the poetic elitists), they do not select poetry for their purposes, for this, although still enjoying reputation, nevertheless appeared to be a thing of the past; instead, they decide to use the medium of the novel, on the basis that it offers better competitive conditions as poetry. In order to assert themselves against the popular naturalists on this terrain, they couple the novel with the prestigious concept 'psychology' (recalling H. Taine, next to E. Renan, one of the great authorities in the intellectual field), counter the milieu descriptions of the naturalists with psychological analysis and do not write about the common people (as the naturalists do) but pick the higher echelons of society as their preferred object of study. The fact that the *Servet-i Fünûn* group also set the events of their psychological novels in the better circles of society, adopted the 'autonomy of art' as their motto and so ascribed to the abstinence from politics and social criticism this demanded – this attitude has until now been explained as a way of avoiding 'Abdülhamid'ian censorship. But for this purpose, a self-imposed limitation to pure psychology would have sufficed, the claim laid upon the elitist notion of 'autonomy' and the monopolisation of the genuinely 'artistic' would not have been required. These aspects are only plausible when viewed as the result of a development similar to the one in France, especially since the *Servet-i Fünûn* members themselves were mostly from the upper strata of society.

There are many further parallels, but the two cases described above may suffice for now, so that we can proceed to ask which kind of conclusions we may draw from the above?

2.5 Conclusions

I hope that the above considerations have shown that a parallel reading and periodisation of Western and Middle Eastern literatures, directly next to each other, is not entirely unfounded, and even makes very good sense. While such a parallelling certainly does not claim complete identity between these phenomena, it is rewarding to view them as belonging to the same 'global' processes.

Such a view entails a number of consequences. An important task of Middle Eastern literary studies (above all literary *history*) should be to describe these literatures in their temporal relationship with *simultaneous* phenomena in the West. To achieve this, the usual paths must be left behind. In particular, this demands, first and foremost, an initial suspending of customary terminology, to avoid falling into the trap laid out by conventional Eurocentrist periodisational concepts. For it makes much more sense to place an author such as Jubrān

Khalil Jubrān next to Stefan George than to declare him a ‘Romantic’ and in this way construct a correspondence with European authors from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Jubrān may have used many means of expression recalling Western Romanticism, yet he himself was mainly productive in the twentieth century. In a similar way, the aesthetic notion formulated by Mikhā’il Nu’ayma in *al-Ghīrbāl* (1923), that literature could only then generate a convincing effect when the authors have “thought through and ‘*felt through*’” (Landau 1968, 281; my translation and italics) what they write, or even the emphasis on feeling and personal experience also observable in Egyptian writers such as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Shukrī,³⁴ al-‘Aqqād³⁵ and Ibrāhīm Nāji³⁶ or the Ottoman Yakup Kadri (Karasosmanoğlu),³⁷ can be seen together with roughly simultaneous European phenomena, such as the widespread irrationalism and currents like *Lebensphilosophie* (“Philosophy of Life”). To put it a bit pointedly: instead of (or at least not to the same degree as) directing our attention to the *non-simultaneity* of the simultaneous (and hence on *alterity* and difference), we should make ourselves aware of the *simultaneity* of the non-simultaneous (and hence the *global* dimensions).

This would not just have consequences for reflections on Middle Eastern literatures but also for periodisational and genre concepts developed from and for European literatures, as these are generally used as if they were of global (or even universal) validity. Therefore, one task should be to scrutinise the Eurocentric concepts to see whether they are in fact useful for describing global phenomena. Should a term like ‘naturalist novel’ prove to be suitable for a global phenomenon, it should definitely cover a number of varieties (occasionally very distinct from one another on the textual surface) – a French, German, Arabic, or Turkish naturalist novel. None of these varieties should then possess the power to impose its surface characteristics to describe the genre or period as a whole and so allow a classification of the others as its imperfect offspring, or ‘hybrid’. This implies that European-style novels and short stories, while undoubtedly modern genres, cannot claim an exclusive right to modernity – modernity can express itself through ‘traditional’, autochthonous genres, too.

34 *inna l-shi‘r wijdān* (“Poetry is feeling”): quoted in Brugman 1984, 117.

35 He defines the poet as one who “feels and makes [us] feel” (*yash‘ur wa-yush‘ir*), a statement from 1912, quoted in Brugman 1984, 128.

36 According to Nāji poetry deals with hardly anything else than “the poet’s intensely personal experiences”: Badawi 1975, 130.

37 In an early work such as *Erenlerin Bağından* (1918/19) he consciously uses a “language of the heart”: Atsız 1988/92 (my transl.)

For studies concerned with the ‘great’ literatures this may mean a painful withdrawal from their position as the defining power. And yet, they too would benefit. For it is only through the mediation of the *tertium comparationis* of the global processes at work that they will first become truly aware of their own (national, or regional) specificity. In other words, without taking non-European – for example, Middle Eastern – literatures into consideration, it is not possible to determine what, actually, is specifically ‘Western’ about Western literatures. And without such an insight into the ‘multilingualism’ of modernity it will also remain impossible to grasp the fact “that modernity is at the same time both specific and universal” (Schulze 2000, 6).

Part II: **Linguistic aspects**

The language of the Nahḍa

3 Morpho-semantic evidence of emerging subjectivity in the language of the Nahḍa

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This chapter: A transformative process as fundamental as the emergence of subjectivity and the corresponding subject-object divide operates on numerous levels and in numerous domains of human activity and ‘being in the world’. The subject expresses itself, or better: its self, in new ways of approaching the world (which now appears in a new quality, namely as the proactive subject’s object), and the subject seeks to assert its own agency, which it gradually and increasingly becomes aware of, in numerous kinds of activity. While Chapter 1 showed that the emergence and self-affirmation of the Arabs’ subjectivity as we can observe it during the Nahḍa unfolds in two main phases, and while Chapter 2 sought to underline that the re-“organisation” or re-“ordering” (*tanẓīm*) and the “rising” or “upswing” (*nahḍa*) take place simultaneously with, and can be read as Middle Eastern specifications of, two more general, ‘global’ periods (those called “Reproductionism” and “Creativism” by the late Walter Falk), Chapter 3 now is the first of the chapters of this book to examine some of the various aspects of emerging subjectivity in more detail, namely language.

The chapter reviews some key concepts of the Arab(ic) Nahḍa with the aim of highlighting the usefulness of a more genuinely linguistic, i.e., grammar- and etymology-oriented approach for a deeper understanding of some basic features of the foundational period of Arab modernity. My contention and starting-point is that emerging subjectivity in the Arab world is reflected not only in the many phenomena we are used to associate with the Nahḍa – the emergence of the intellectual, of critical journalism, of historicism, sentimentalism, new literary genres, etc. – but also in the morpho-semantics of key Nahḍa terminology, i.e., in the language that is used to express the subject’s engaging and dealing with the world. I argue (a) that the self-referential *t*-morpheme that features in many words signifying important Nahḍa concepts, such as *taraqqī*, *taqaddum*, or *tamaddun*, can and should be seen in the same light, i.e., as an indicator of a new emphasis on the self. Moreover, I argue that both the grammatical form of larger parts of the new vocabulary (e.g., the *-iyya* suffix for abstracts, verbal nouns, the causative patterns of form II and IV) and its ‘original’, ‘basic’ (root) meanings underline (b) secularisation and the concomitant centrality of the human being, as well as (c) proactivity, energetic verve, and creativity, i.e., the subject’s being a

cause of change in time (hence history). Thus, each new conceptual term can be seen as a little ‘Nahḍa in a nutshell’, containing the very essence of Nahḍawī thought and the actual experience of feeling ‘modern’, the morpho-semantics of the terms expressing fundamental notions such as secularisation, self-referentiality, rationality (with conceptualisation, critical examination, abstraction, etc.), causality, temporalisation, etc.

* * *

3.1 Introduction

This chapter was inspired by three 2019 workshops: *The Near Eastern Saddle Period: The Formation of Modern Concepts in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian* (Berne/CH, June 12–14); *Rethinking Genre in the Islamicate Middle East* (Hamburg/DE, September 5–7); and *The Multiple Renaissances: Revolutions, Translations, and the Movement of Ideas across the Eastern Mediterranean in the Nineteenth Century* (Torino/IT, October 24–25). Much of the terminology that was topical at these events¹ had also been discussed on several earlier occasions at my current home university, e.g., at the *Rethinking the Nahḍa* workshop (organised by Rana Issa, June 2017), or the workshop on *Key Concepts of Ottoman History* (convened by Einar Wigen, July 2016).²

As a follow-up to these events I prepared and circulated a rather voluminous study on the *etymology* and *semantic history* of much of the terminology that had been on the workshops’ agendas. I did so not only because, as a long-time adherent of the ‘linguistic turn’ in the Humanities, I am convinced of the deeper (existential) significance of linguistic phenomena (language as a reflection of ‘being’), but also because I believe in the usefulness of more genuinely linguistic approaches, focusing grammar and etymology (both in the European sense and in that of Arabic *ishtiḳāq*, see below), for a more thorough understanding of conceptual terminology, or even a precondition of it. Abstract grammar, ‘pure’ etymology and merely lexicographically descriptive semantic history are, of course, to

¹ The Bern programme, for instance, featured presentations on *nafir*, *ḥaqīqa*, *hawas*, *tamaddun*, *tarbiya*, *ḥadāna*, *inḳalāb*, *milla/millet*, *tāʾifa*, *dīn*, *ferd*, *mujtamaʿ/al-hayʿa al-ijtimāʿiyya*, *ʿilm*, *ʿerfān*, *khilāfa*, *istibdād*, *insāniyyet*, *beṣeriyet*, *ādemiyet*, and others, not the least Nahḍa itself.

² Contributions made at this latter workshop included papers on *tārīkh*, *ḳadīm* vs. *ḥadīṣ*, *ikhtilāl*, *tedennī*, *tecdīd*, *terakḳī*, *millet*, *ümmeṭ*, *nizām*, *tanẓīmāt*, *ḳānūn*, *ḥuḳūk*, *ʿadālet*, *ẓulm*, *muʿāşır-laşma*, and *zaman/zamān*.

be used with caution, as the speakers of a language often are unaware of the morphological structure and/or the origins and long-term development of the vocabulary they use.³ However, possible fallacies notwithstanding, more strictly ‘bottom-up’ linguistic approaches, informed by the ‘traditional’ categories of Arabic philology the Nahḍawī agents themselves were used to apply, are in my opinion still indispensable for an adequate understanding of the language of the Nahḍa, given that “the interest in language matters was central to the Arab renaissance” (Sawaie 2000, 395) and that the overwhelming majority of those who were active in coining new conceptual terminology belonged to the group of ‘men-of-letters’ (*udabāʾ*) who traditionally were highly language-sensitive, due to the important place that the familiarity with grammar and the ‘wide oceans’ of the Arabic lexicon, rhetorics and the literary heritage held in Arab culture/*adab* and their education.⁴ The *udabāʾ* were themselves philologists, and when they used old or created new terminology they did so not simply intuitively, but with a high degree of reflective awareness.⁵ Moreover, many of those involved in the rendering of

3 For a comprehensive discussion of the pros and cons of etymology for conceptual history, cf., e.g., Spira 2019.

4 As four prominent cases in point that testify to this type of formation and attitude we may mention Rifāʿa R. al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801–1873), (Aḥmad) Fāris al-Shidyāq (1804/6?–1887), Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819–1883), and Ibrāhīm al-Yāziji (1847–1906). For biographical sketches, cf., among many others, (for al-Ṭaḥṭāwī:) Dāghir, *Maṣādir*, ii, 552–6; Heyworth-Dunne 1937–39/1940; Öhrnberg 1994/2012; and Sawāʾī 1999, 122–24; (for al-Shidyāq:) Dāghir, *Maṣādir*, ii, 457–64; Karam 1964; Sawāʾī 1999, 100–5; and Junge 2019a, , 35–53; (for al-Bustānī:) Dāghir, *Maṣādir*, ii, 181–5; Abdel-Nour 2012, and Zachs 2018; (for al-Yāziji:) Dāghir, *Maṣādir*, ii, 759–63; Gully 2001/2012. – Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī grew up in a family of prominent *imāms* and ‘*ulamāʾ*’ and was trained at al-Azhar in the classical canon of Islamic learning; al-Shidyāq started out as a copyist and later studied, among other things, Arabic language, logic, theology, and prosody; al-Bustānī received his basic formation (1830–40) at the college of ‘Ayn Warqa; Ibrāhīm al-Yāziji was the second eldest son of Nāṣif al-Yāziji, one of the leading philologists and poets of his time, whose commitment to language he inherited.

5 An enormous number of philological treatises and large-scale linguistic studies as well as textbooks/manuals and lexicographical enterprises, among which whole dictionaries, testify to this fact, as do also the fierce debates (not seldom with *ad hominem* attacks) about ‘correct’ Arabic and permissible/‘illicit’ innovations, etc. See, e.g., al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s *Manāḥij al-albāb al-miṣriyya fi mābāḥij al-ādāb al-ʿaṣriyya* (1869) which, though essentially a book on Egyptian society, also contains many linguistic explanations and considerations; the same holds for his famous account of the Egyptian study mission to France, *Takhliṣ al-ibriz fi talkhiṣ Bārīz* (1834); on al-Shidyāq, Karam writes that, as a linguist, the author “is to be remembered for his debates with his chief followers [Y. al-Asīr, I. al-Aḥḍab, N. and I. al-Yāziji, B. al-Bustānī, Adib Ishāq, ... On such a debate, see Patel 2010]. In *al-Djāsūs ʿala ʾl-Kāmūs* (Istanbul 1299/1881) he points out, in the course of a long introduction [...], the shortcomings of the Arabic dictionaries, establishes the reason for this [...], and demonstrates the principal errors committed by their various authors

European conceptual terminology into Arabic, particularly Christians, not only knew the direct source languages (typically French), but were also trained in Latin and/or old Greek, a fact that made them conscious of the etymology of the French terminology itself.⁶ And even if a *adīb* did not know Latin or Greek, he nevertheless would often make inquiries among native speakers of the source language about the ‘original’ meaning of the term he was about to translate into Arabic.⁷ They did so not the least out of a professional habit, as many of them

[...]. [... Moreover, there is] *Sirr al-layāl fi ’l-ḳalb wa-’l-ibdāl* (i, Istanbul 1884 [...]), in which the author undertakes the study of the verbs and nouns in current use, which he arranges according to their pronunciation in order to demonstrate the links connecting them, their origin and the nuances distinguishing them, as well as of permutation, inversion and synonyms [...].” Al-Shidyāq’s travel accounts, *al-Wāsiṭa fi ma’rifat aḥwāl Mālṭa* (1836) and *Kashf al-mukhabbā ‘an funūn Urubbā* (1866), too, as well as many articles he authored in his journal, *al-Jawā’ib* (later collected in the 7-volume *Kanz al-raghā’ib*, contain philological ponderings and linguistic discussions. Moreover, he wrote textbooks on grammar (most famous, and controversial, probably his *Ġunyat al-ṭālib fi munyat al-rāghib*, 1871) and also composed a trilingual (Persian-Turkish-Arabic) dictionary (*Kanz al-lughāt*, 1876). – Al-Bustānī is most remembered, as a linguist, as the author of numerous lectures held at scientific gatherings and articles and pamphlets published in the press, an educational manual on Arabic grammar (*Bulūgh al-arab fi naḥw al-‘Arab*, ca. 1847) and, first and foremost, his two dictionaries, *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ* (1869–70) and *Qaṭr al-Muḥīṭ* (1870). – Cf. also Nāṣif al-Yāziji’s notorious critique of the language of the press, *Lughat al-jarā’id* (1901), and J. Zaydān’s many writings about language (for some excerpts in English translation, see Philipp 2014, ch. “Language”, 177–238). – Ibrāhīm al-Yāziji “was principally a philologist, stylist and lexicographer”, wrote “a number of letters in poetic form [...] dealing with mainly linguistic themes collected together in his *Rasā’il al-Yāzidjī* (Cairo 1920)” and “played a major role in the revival of the Arab linguistic heritage”; he is best known for his *Lughat al-jarā’id* (Cairo 1901), a collection of “serialised articles attacking the standards of Arabic employed by his fellow journalists”; he, too, wrote a dictionary, *al-Farā’id al-ḥisān min qalā’id al-lisān* (left unfinished though) (Gully 2001/2012). – For debates on purification etc., cf. Gully 1997, 101 ff.

⁶ Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī knew French, al-Shidyāq English, French, Persian and Turkish, and B. al-Bustānī acquired proficiency in no less than nine (European and Semitic) languages. See Guth 2003b, 470, and Zachs 2018.

⁷ When, for instance, R.R. al-Ṭaḥṭāwī reports about his visits to the theatres of Paris, it is clear that he has asked people about the ‘original’ meaning of the French words he was trying to find Arabic equivalents for: “I do not know of an Arabic word that renders the meaning of [French] *spectacle* (*sibiktākīl*) or *théâtre* (*tiyātīr*). The basic meaning of the word *spectacle* is ‘view’, ‘place of recreation’ or some such, whereas *théâtre* originally also meant ‘game’, ‘entertainment’, or the venue where this takes place. And so it may be compared with those actors called ‘shadow players.’ More appropriately, shadow play is a form of theatre, as both are known by the Turks as *komeḍya*. However, this denomination is too restrictive, except if it is used in a broader sense. There is no objection to translating *théâtre* or *spectacle* as *khayāl* [‘imaginary’] if you enlarge the meaning of this word, as a result of which it comes close to the idea of ‘spectacle’” – al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Takhlīṣ al-ibriz*, 211 / transl. Newman, 231 (on the quoted passage cf. also Sawaie 2000, 396). –

were active, and prolific, translators.⁸

Given the importance of the practice of *ishtiḡāq* (derivation from a ‘root’, as the assumed bearer of an ‘original’, basic/essential meaning)⁹ and the traditional “panchronic” (Seidensticker 2008) compilatory approach of Arabic lexicography that conceived of the lexicon as a reservoir of quasi-timeless semantic possibilities, quite frequently resulting in the “continued resonance of earlier senses” (Spira 2019, 34) of words that had acquired new conceptual meanings – given these two facts, it is promising to try to understand Nahḍa vocabulary with the help of exactly those categories that the protagonists themselves were used to apply.¹⁰ My present article will therefore have a closer look at some derivational

Cf. also, for instance, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s introduction of the old *kahrabā* ‘amber’ as the new word for ‘electricity’ (according to Monteil 1960, 134); the extension of meaning of *kahrabā* – an originally Persian word (< *kāh-robā*, lit. ‘robber of straw’, due to the electromagnetic features of amber; see *EtyArab*, s.v. vKHRB) – was with all likelihood inspired by the European model where *electricity* is based on Greek *ēlektron* ‘amber’; al-Ṭaḥṭāwī here obviously sought to re-produce the European way of coining neologisms by replacing the European variables with corresponding Arabic ones. Most probably, he acquired knowledge about the etymology of European terminology through learned French informants, such as S. de Sacy, A.-P. Caussin de Perceval, and E.-F. Jomard, with whom he had become friends; it is also known that he had “frequent discussions of language issues” with these (Sawaie 2000, 396).

8 Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī was trained and examined thoroughly as a translator when in Paris and later served in this profession at the School of Medicine and the Artillery School (1831–1834), then (from 1837) as head of the newly created School of Languages (*Madrasat al-lughāt*); al-Shidyāq and al-Bustānī were both involved in new translations of the Bible. In his *Takhlīṣ al-Ibriz*, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī included “translation” (*tarjama*) in a list of sciences/crafts (*ṣināʾāt*) that the Arabs should learn from the West (p. 19–20). Significantly, the author underlines that it is a very difficult “art” (*fann*) to master as it demands profound knowledge of the source and the target language as well as intimate familiarity with the subject matter and the corresponding terminology (*maʾrifat iṣṭilāḥāt uṣūl al-ʿilm al-murād tarjamatuhā*) – see Sawaie 2000, 397–99.

9 Cf., e.g., Fleisch 1973/2012 and Chekayri 2007. – Cf. also Dichy 2011 (esp. section 3 on “Linguistic structure and the coinage of new terms”), and Larcher 2011, and id. 2012, 16 and passim. – *Ishtiḡāq* is often translated as ‘etymology’, but unlike etymology ‘proper’ (in the European linguistic tradition), the term does not imply attempts at historical reconstruction; it is a completely synchronic process, trying to ascribe any existing lexeme to an underlying abstract ‘root’.

10 Versteegh 2001, 179, briefly discusses the methods of coining new vocabulary during the Nahḍa. In at least three of them *ishtiḡāq* plays a major role: the analogical extension of an existing root (e.g., *sayyāra* ‘automobile, car’ < ṽSYR ‘to move around’; *ʿawlama* ‘globalization’ < LM ‘knowledge; world’), the semantic extension of an existing word (e.g., *qīṭār* ‘chain of camels in a row’ > ‘train’), and ‘loan translation’ (calquing, e.g., *ḥāṭif* ‘hidden caller’ > ‘phone’, *al-muthul al-ʿulyā* ‘the lofty examples’ > ‘ideals’). Nahḍa writing abounds in examples that document the authors’ application of their lexicographical knowledge combined with techniques of *ishtiḡāq*, cf. Monteil 1960, 106–31, and Stetkevych 1970, 7–45. – To cite only one concrete example:

categories (the *t*-morpheme, the *-iyya* ending, verbal nouns, the causativity of verb forms II and IV, etc.), trying to highlight their semantic implications,¹¹ as well as to shed light on the semantic background of other, non-derived lexemes that acquired new meanings during the *Nahḍa*, in search of features that these other items may share with the derived ones.¹²

From the above it is clear that it cannot be the intention of this article to come with a completely new analytical-hermeneutical approach and to provide a comprehensive theoretical-methodological framework corresponding to it. Rather, it is meant as a reminder for current and future research of the usefulness of a three-fold going ‘back to the roots’, encouraging scholars (1) to give more attention to the root meanings associated with newly coined conceptual terminology as roots in Arabic, by their very nature of overarching semantic categories to which a large number of ‘related’ lexemes belong and are ‘derived’ from, tend to form associative ‘semantic fields’ of sorts in their own right;¹³ (2) to take into account the techniques applied by the *udabā*’ agents themselves, particularly all kinds of ‘derivation’ (*ishtiqaq*);¹⁴ and (3) to be less neglectful of the seminal work of earlier generations of researchers.¹⁵ With this in mind, this article should be read as a compilation of lexicographical and grammatical data (and ideas related to the semantics of grammatical forms) to which, to all my knowledge, current conceptual history has given little attention although these data are easily available – in dictionaries or implied in the language’s morphology – and although, as data inherent in the language with which ‘modernity’ was conceived and a *Nahḍa* promoted, they certainly reflect *very* deep layers and *fundamental* aspects of the experience of be(com)ing ‘modern’, like the subject-object divide, secularisation, or temporalisation and the human being’s agency in the world.

Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī, in his famous treatise on “The Eight [Key] Concepts” of his time (*Risālat al-Kalīm al-thamān*, 1880/81), starts the discussion of each of these terms with a traditional lexicographical survey of the meanings Classical dictionaries attach to the respective word and from which root they are ‘derived’, etc. See my study about his treatment of the term *waṭan* (Guth 2016 [= Chapter 5 in the present volume]) where I also called his philological approach an ‘*adab-tation*’. – For a Nahḍa key figure’s (Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s) understanding of the role of *adab* (and, with it, of language) for the whole project of modernisation, cf. Ryle Hodges’ highly insightful presentation (Ryle Hodges 2011).

11 For a similar approach, cf. Dichy 2003.

12 Every now and then, my investigation will draw on the findings of the seminal studies of Monteil 1960, Stetkevych 1970, Rebhan 1986, Ayalon 1987a and 1987b, and Lewis 1988/1991.

13 For a discussion of the similarity of Arabic roots and ‘semantic fields’, cf., e.g., Grande, “Ibn Sida”.

14 See notes 9 and 10 above.

15 And I should probably add: ...and in other languages than only English.

As a consequence, the headings under which the data are arranged – “The *t*-morpheme”, “Secularisation”, “The Subject’s Agency” – should not be read as markers of the logical components of an effort that would strive to systematically and comprehensively map a new terrain of research. Rather, they are intended as three lenses that may serve to view the data under some meaningful aspects that I hope will ensure connectivity between ‘traditional’, more thoroughly linguistic investigation and ‘modern’ conceptual history – and in this way contribute to an extended, more detailed and more language-sensitive mapping of the many sub-fields of Nahḍa Studies. It would be a pleasure for me to see that the data provided in this article were welcomed as useful complementary information by the colleagues who catered to the above-mentioned workshops, but also if they could generate further research (see also section “In lieu of a conclusion”, below).

3.2 The *t*-morpheme

Of all conceptual terms that gained specific prominence during the Nahḍa, three are perhaps the most ‘central’ or ‘basic’ ones: *taraqqī* ‘progress’, *taqaddum* ‘id.’, and *tamaddun* ‘civilisation’. Before turning our attention to the semantics of the *taFa* “*uL*” pattern on which all three terms are coined, let us have a quick look at each of the terms individually.

Taraqqī (indef. *taraqqīm*) is a verbal noun (henceforth ‘vn.’) V, based on the form I verb, *raqiya*, *a* (*raqy*, *ruqīy*) ‘to rise, ascend, climb’.¹⁶ In addition to the primary meaning ‘ascension, ascent’ which is very similar to that of form I,¹⁷ *taraqqī* has also taken the figurative meaning of ‘advancement’, and during the Nahḍa more specifically that of ‘progress, rise, progressive development’.

While ‘progress’ is conceived as an ‘upward’ development here, a climbing of the civilisational ladder up into higher spheres, so to speak, the term that gradually superseded *taraqqī* as the Nahḍa equivalent of ‘progress’, *taqaddum*, reproduces the French *progrès* (< Latin *pro-gredi*) etymologically more faithfully, underlining the (horizontal) advancement rather than the (vertical) movement implied in *taraqqī*.¹⁸ (For the records, to be remembered further down: One may

¹⁶ In addition to this value, the root *VRQW/Y* also shows items expressing the idea of ‘charm, spell, incantation’ (e.g., *rāqī* ‘enchanter’). But this semantic field does not appear to be related to ‘climbing, ascension’. See root entry *VRQY* in *EtymArab*.

¹⁷ In the Qur’ān, form I usually refers to Muḥammad’s ascension to heaven – Badawi & Abdel Haleem 2008.

¹⁸ A similar shift can be observed in Ottoman Turkish into which Arabic *taraqqī* had been borrowed. In Zenker’s *Dictionnaire/Handwörterbuch* (1866), *teraqqī* still seems to denote mainly a

perhaps take this shift as one of the many indicators of a gradual temporalisation of Nahḍa thinking. While *taraqḡī*, as an upwards movement, does not necessarily underline the time factor implied in progressing towards an imagined future, the ‘horizontal’ *taqaddum* fits more aptly into the concept of history advancing along a monodirectional time-line leading from the past via the present to the future.¹⁹⁾ *Taqaddum* is the vn. of *taqaddama* ‘to precede, go ahead, lead; [...] to move, proceed; to progress; to come closer, move nearer, approach; [etc]’. The latter is derived either from *qadama*, *u* (*qadm*, *quḍūm*) ‘to precede’, or *qadima*, *a* (*quḍūm*, *qidmān*, *maqdam*) ‘to arrive (at a place); to come; to get to, reach (s.o., a place); to have the audacity to do s.th. (‘alā)’. Contrary to what one might expect, these are not denominative from *qadam* ‘foot’, as this latter seems to be a development peculiar to Arabic²⁰ while the Proto-Semitic etymata can (according to Huehnergard 2011) be reconstructed as **qadm-* ‘front, east, earlier time’ and a denominative vb. meaning **‘to precede, be in front’*. Irrespective of etymological evidence, however, we may well assume that *qadam* ‘foot’ contributed to the forming of the idea of ‘progress’, as progressing also is a step-by-step sequence.

Tamaddun is the vn. of *tamaddana*, a denominative formation based on *madīna* ‘town, city’,²¹ thus literally meaning something like ‘to (make oneself) become like, or make oneself into, a city-dweller, to urbanise oneself’. Apparently

vertical movement, while the neologism *ilerleme* that was to replace *terakḡī* after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, is again, like Arabic *taqaddum*, a literal translation of ‘advancement, progress’, i.e., a *horizontal* movement.

19 In the light of such evidence, I tend to answer the central question asked at the Bern workshop – whether the Nahḍa could/should be regarded as a Middle Eastern *Sattelzeit* in Koselleckian terms – in the affirmative: As I tried to show also elsewhere (cf. Guth 2021a [= Chapter 17], 2022 [= Chapter 9], and 2023b [= Chapter 6]), temporalisation (as a key indicator of the European *Sattelzeit*) can, in my opinion, definitively be observed in the Middle Eastern ‘long nineteenth century’ too. – ‘Sattelzeit’ is a term coined by R. Koselleck to denote the period of transition between the early modern period and Modernity, spanning, in Europe, from around 1750 to 1870. The new experience of Time is a key marker of this period, changing the human subject’s attitude to life and the world in a fundamental manner that, naturally, was also reflected in the temporalisation of key conceptual terminology.

20 In Arabic, *qadam* exists alongside with the more common, and more original, *rijl* (< Central Semitic **rigl-* ‘foot’); but the main Proto-Semitic word for ‘foot’ was probably **pa‘m-* (> Ar fa‘ama ‘to have fat hips’) – Kogan, “Proto-Semitic Lexicon”, and *Genealogical Classification*.

21 *Madīna* in its turn tends to be derived by Arab lexicographers from a root *ṽMDN*, but it may in fact be a loan from Syriac and go back, etymologically, to a Semitic root **ṽDYN* ‘to judge’ (Huehnergard, “Proto-Semitic Language and Culture”). Therefore, *madīna* is probably related to *dīn* – not in the sense of ‘religion’, however, but in that of ‘judgement’ (as in the Qur’ānic *yawm al-dīn* ‘Day of Judgement’, i.e., the Day of Resurrection). Thus, like Hebrew *məḏīnā^h* and Syriac *məḏīttā* (< *məḏīntā*), also Arabic *madīna* seems to have meant the ‘place (nomen loci prefix **ma-*)

during the second half of the nineteenth century, *tamaddun* came to be used as the equivalent of French *civilisation*, both as a process (to become civilised, civilise oneself) and the resulting state (to be civilised).²² As such, the term was preferred over others with similar meanings, like *ḥaḍāra* or *‘umrān*, perhaps because it sounded more sophisticated, more modern, more ‘civilised’ than the other two: *ḥaḍāra* was coined on *ḥaḍar* and thus essentially meant not much more than ‘sedentariness’, and *‘umrān*, though a key term in Khaldūnian thought expressing notions of thriving and flourishing that were very similar to the idea of ‘civilisation’, may have had an old-fashioned touch exactly due to its Khaldūnian past, or was not felt to be ‘refined’ enough, as it was derived from nothing but the ‘basic’ activity of *‘amara* ‘to build, erect (< *to populate, fill with life)’. – It would be interesting to compare these and the following assumptions to ideas, expressed by some Nahḍawi philologists themselves, on the relation between *tamaddun*, *ḥaḍāra*, and *‘umrān* and their appropriateness, or inappropriateness,

where judgements/sentences are passed, seat of jurisdiction, court’.

22 When exactly that happened is difficult to determine. In his *Dictionnaire français–arabe* of 1828, Ellious Bocthor still suggests *annasa* (vn. *ta’nīs*), *addaba* (vn. *ta’dīb*), *‘allama* (vn. *ta’līm*) for the act of civilising someone, understood as ‘polir les mœurs, rendre sociable’, while the state of being civilised is translated as *‘umrān*, *unsa* or *adab*, and ‘civility’ as *adab* or *shalbana* (i.e., being a *shalabī* ‘gentilhomme, citizen’, from Turkish *çelebi*). In 1860, Kazimirski (*Dictionnaire arabe-français*) renders *tamaddun* as ‘état social, policé’ and *tamaddana* as ‘se réunir en société civile, politique (en parlant du genre humain, qui a échangé l’état sauvage contre l’état social)’ – the term ‘civilisation’ is still not mentioned yet. A few years later, however, al-Bustānī (*Quṭr al-muḥīṭ*) explains *tamaddana* as a postclassical coining (*muwallada*) meaning ‘to adopt the mores of the city-dwellers, go over from a state of wilderness, barbarity and ignorance to one of elegance, sociability, and knowledge’ (*takhallaqa bi-akhlāq ahl al-mudun wa-ntaqala min ḥālat al-khushūna wa-l-barbariyya wa-l-jahl ilā ḥālat al-ẓarf wa-l-uns wa-l-ma’rifa*), a sense that, though drawing on the use of the term by thinkers like Ibn Miskawayh (as Abu-‘Uksa, “Imagining modernity”, has shown), comes very close to the modern notion of ‘civilisation’. The latter is first mentioned, in my sources, in Zenker’s *Dictionnaire/Handwörterbuch* of 1866 where *temeddūn* is not only rendered as ‘action de se fixer ou de s’établir dans une ville; état social policé | Niederlassung in einer Stadt, Bildung einer städtischen Gemeinde, städtisches oder staatliches Gemeinwesen’ but also as ‘civilisation | Civilisation’. Catafago’s Arabic-English/English-Arabic dictionary of 1873 has no entry, in the English-Arabic part, on English *civilisation*, but for Arabic *tamaddun*, ‘civilisation’ is given as a second value, after ‘settling in a town.’ Three years earlier, Wahrmond’s Arabic-German/German-Arabic *Handwörterbuch* (1870) had already both lemmata, *tamaddun* and *Civilisation*. As in Catafago, ‘civilisation’ is given there only as a secondary value of *tamaddun* while ‘das Wohnen in der Stadt; städtisches Wesen’ are primary; in a similar vein, *tamaddun* comes last in a list of Arabic expressions that might correspond to *Civilisation*: talking about a ‘Zustand’, it corresponds, according to Wahrmond, to Arabic *adab* or *al-ādāb al-ḥaḍariyya*, or *‘umrān*, or *unsa*; referring to a process, the Arabic equivalents might be *ta’dīb al-akhlāq* or *ta’nīs* (to civilise someone) or *ta’addub* (to civilise oneself) – only then *tamaddun*.

as equivalents of the European terms. Regrettably, no such statement has come to my attention so far.

However, there may have been yet another reason for preferring *tamaddun* over *ḥaḍāra* and *ʿumrān*, namely the very form of the term. As the vn. of a form V verb coined on the *taFaʿʿuL* pattern, *tamaddun* possessed three features that were neither found in *ḥaḍāra* nor in *ʿumrān*:

- it resembled *civilisation* in that it was a derived form, not a ‘simple’, basic one, with the two morphological elements (*t*-morpheme, reduplication of R₂) mirroring both the composition of the French term (*civil-is-ation*) and its air of sophistication, refinement, intellectualization, quasi-scientific abstraction;
- the *t*-morpheme expressed self-referentiality or reflexivity, i.e., an involvement of the speaker, the agent;²³
- reduplication of R₂ in the *FaʿʿaLa* pattern (form II) of which form V is an extension implied intensity, change, ‘processuality’, and causality.

Tamaddun shares these features not only with *taraqqī* and *taqaddum*, but also with many other terms that were coined or revived during the Nahḍa.²⁴ All these terms denote activities or processes that cause change (*akhhkharā* ‘to cause to be late’, *ṣarrafa* ‘to cause to change direction’, *ṭawwara* ‘to cause to unfold’, *farnaja* ‘to make European’); and each also tells us, by way of the *t*-morpheme, that in these cases, the agent performs the respective activity on *him-/herself*.

Let us turn our attention to the latter aspect first! If we make a slight modification in our wording, replacing ‘on *him-/herself*’ with ‘on his/her *self*’, it becomes immediately evident that the *taFaʿʿuL* terms doubly emphasise the acting subject: it is not only the responsible agent but also the object of its own actions, experiencing the effects of its own deeds through its own self: *taʿakhhkharā* ‘to cause *oneself* to be late’, *taṣarrafa* ‘to cause *oneself* to change direction’,²⁵ *taṭawwara* ‘to cause *oneself* to unfold’, *tafarnuj* ‘to Europeanise *oneself*’, etc.).

²³ For the semantics of the *t*-morpheme in general, cf., e.g., Larcher, “Verb”, section 3.1.3.2 (“Forms with *t*”), and id., *Le Système verbal*, 75–77 (ch. V.1 on “Les formes augmentées en *t*”).

²⁴ Cf., e.g., *taʿakhhkhar* ‘lagging behind’ (the opposite of *taqaddum*), *taḥarruk* ‘movement, circulation’, *taḥaffuz* ‘verve, drive, vigour’, *takhalluf* ‘lagging behind, under-development’, *taṣarruf* ‘behaviour’, *taṭawwur* ‘evolution, development’, *tafarnuj* ‘Europeanisation’, *tamarrud* ‘rebellion, mutiny’, *tanaqqul* ‘removal, change of place’, etc. – Here and in the following, my examples are taken from Monteil’s seminal study (*L’Arabe moderne*).

²⁵ By the way, the concept of *taṣarruf* ‘right of disposal, discretion, flexibility’ was a key term in the linguistic debate about ‘modern’ terminology, as, e.g., the extension of older meanings of

Verbal nouns coined on the *taFa*‘*uL* pattern are not the only key terms that contain the *t*-morpheme and in this way express an involvement of the acting subject.²⁶ Very productive during the Nahḍa were also (as Monteil has shown in greater detail) forms VIII (*iFti*‘*āL*)²⁷ and X (*istiF*‘*āL*)²⁸ – to name only the two others that show the *-t*-morpheme).

As long as we do not have a dictionary of Nahḍa Arabic, and no machine-readable one in particular, that would allow us to make reliable statements about

a word demanded from the agents, the emerging subjects, the capacity of making own, independent, ‘free’ decisions about new meanings.

26 As Larcher is eager to underline (*Le Système verbal*, 75) that Arab grammarians analysed the *t*-morpheme as a marker of *muṭāwa’a*, i.e., of “le fait de subir un effet et de recevoir l’effet de l’acte”.

27 Cf., e.g., (examples taken from Monteil 1960, translated into English and ‘etymology’ added by myself, SG): *ibtikār* ‘originality, inventiveness’ < *‘to be the first (*bikr*) oneself; *ijtimā* ‘society, sociology’ < *‘to organise oneself/come together in groups (*jamā’a*), to meet’; *ihtijāj* ‘protest’ < *‘to promote (one’s own) arguments (*hujaj*, sg. *hujja*)’; *ihtikār* ‘monopoly’ < *‘to lay oneself claim to, claim as one’s own’; *ikhtibār* ‘expertise, test’ < *‘to make one’s own experience (*khibra*), test out s.th. oneself; *ikhtirā* ‘invention, inventiveness’ < *‘to devise s.th. without premeditation (*khir’a*), *irtijāl* ‘improvisation’ < *‘to stand on one’s own feet (*arjul*, sg. *rijl*), to single oneself out’; *irtiqa* ‘evolution (Darwin)’ < *‘to climb oneself, reach oneself a higher level’; *ishtirāk* ‘subscription’ < *‘to take one’s own share, become oneself a stakeholder (*sharik*)’; *i’tirāf* ‘acceptance; confession’ < *‘to acknowledge s.th. oneself; *i’tiqād* ‘opinion, conviction, (religious) belief’ < *‘to “knit” one’s own arguments’; *iqtibās* ‘borrowing, inspiration’ < *‘to let oneself be “ignited” by a “spark” (*qabas*)/an idea’; *iqtiṣād* ‘economising, saving, economy’ < *‘to behave oneself with an intention, a goal in mind (*qaṣd*)’; *iktisāb* ‘acquisition’ < *‘to work for one’s own profit (*kasb*), produce one’s own earnings’; *iktishāf* ‘discovery’ < *‘to reveal s.th. for oneself’; *iltizām* ‘engagement’ < *‘to make s.th. mandatory (*lāzim*) for oneself’; *intiḥār* ‘suicide’ < *‘to cut one’s own throat (*naḥr*)’; *intikhāb* ‘election’ < *‘to make one’s own choice’; *intiqām* ‘revenge’ < *‘to take vengeance (*naqama*) oneself’; *ihtimām* ‘interest’ < *‘to make s.th. one’s own concern (*himma*)’; *ittiḥād* ‘union, confederation’ < *‘to unite oneself, form a union (*waḥda*)’; *ittiṣāl* ‘connection’ < *‘to create a link (*ṣila*) (for) oneself’; *ittifāq* ‘agreement, treaty’ < *‘to agree oneself to a decision, etc.’

28 Cf., e.g., *isti’nāf* ‘ajournment, appeal (*jur.*)’ < *‘to request oneself a new beginning/renewal’ (cf. *anf* ‘nose’); *istibdād* ‘absolutism, despotism’ < *‘arbitrary and capricious rule, “going it alone” (i.e., for oneself)’; *istibṭān* ‘introspection’ < *‘to explore oneself the innermost (*bāṭin*) of things’; *istithmār* ‘investment’ < *‘to make s.th. bear fruits (*thamr*) for oneself’; *istikhrāj* ‘extraction’ < *‘to let s.th. come out (*kharaja*) for oneself’; *istislām* ‘resignation, capitulation’ < *‘to surrender (*aslama*) oneself’; *isti’mār* ‘colonialism, imperialism’ < *‘to cultivate (a region) for oneself’; *isti’māl* ‘use, usage’ < *‘to let s.th. work (*amila*) for oneself’; *istighlāl* ‘exploitation’ < *‘to make yield crops (*ghalla*) for oneself’; *istiftā* ‘plebiscit, public referendum’ < *‘to make people give their (legal) opinion (*fatwā*) for oneself’; *istiqbāl* ‘reception’ < *‘to treat oneself people coming in (*aqbala*)’; *istiqlāl* ‘independence’ < *‘to raise/lift (*aqalla*) oneself’; *istiqāla* ‘dismissal’ < *‘to quit a job/position (*aqāla*) oneself’; *istintāj* ‘deduction’ < *‘to extract oneself a result (*natija*)’; *istihlāk* ‘consumption’ < *‘to “destroy” (*ahlaka*) s.th. for oneself’.

word and/or pattern frequency based on large-scale text corpora, any statement about an assumed predilection of the Nahḍa for certain morphological patterns, it must be underlined, will have to remain a preliminary hypothesis, awaiting confirmation (or falsification) through lexico-statistic evidence.²⁹ However, my impression from my readings of texts from the period is that the Nahḍa was indeed fond of terminology containing the *t*-morpheme.³⁰ And I tend to regard this (assumed) proclivity as yet another indication of an emerging subjectivity, seeking to feel, experience, and assert itself, or *its* self. As discussed elsewhere,³¹ I see other indicators of the steadily growing importance of the human subject in:

- the gradual adoption of new literary genres (the novel and drama), not only as expressions of the author-subject's *creativity*, but also as sites of *emotional* experience, i.e., feeling one('s)self, of personal *musings* and 'philosophical' *contemplation*, i.e., adding *subjective comments* and *impressions*;
- the spread of the journalistic profession and the writer as a public *intellectual*,³² i.e., the subject 'showing off' and asserting him/herself as *critical observer* and *analyst* of contemporary society, and the world at large;

29 Zemánek and Milička's exploration of the "diachronic dynamics of the Arabic lexicon" (subtitle of their *Words Lost and Found*, 2017) can be considered a most valuable starting point, but for the Nahḍa, their sub-corpus certainly needs to be adjusted.

30 A test run of some text-analytical software, recently carried out by Jonathan Johnson, a student of mine, on S. al-Bustānī's novel *al-Huyām fī jinān al-Shām* (1870), a text comprising 45,528 words, was able to show (as a preliminary result) that out of 1,402 different (inflected) verbs 1,099 (i.e., 78.4 %!) showed the *t*-morpheme. They were not necessarily the most frequent ones, but among the top 20 of these clearly some very 'subjective' ones held a prominent place, such as those related to body movement (*taqaddama*: 35 occurrences), sensual perception and physical reaction (*iltafata* 20, *istayqaḥa* 13), sometimes combined with emotional involvement (*irtabaka* 11, *tabassama* 12, *irta'ada* 13), mental perception, judgment and opining (*iftakara* 12, *ta'awwada* 13, *ta'akkada* 11, *idda'ā* 11) and own capacity (*tamakkana* 12) – unpublished project report, KOS4030, spring 2021 – thank you, Jonathan! – Zemánek and Milička's lists (2017) of the 50 most frequent words of three sub-corpora that cover the Nahḍa yield 7 items for nineteenth-century book publications (rank #9 *muhtariz*, #13 *istiḡṣā'ī*, #16 *mutabādir*, #22 *istazhara*, #25 *istashkala*, #40 *tajaddudi*, #43 *muta'ātif*; see Table 17, 120–1), 5 items for early twentieth century books (rank #2 *muhtār*, #23 *istiḥṣāl*, #43 *ishtirā'*, #44 *istahṣala*, and #46 *mutawazzif*; see Table 18, 123–4), and 6 items for late nineteenth / early twentieth c. periodicals (rank #18 *iqtiṣādī*, #24 *ishtirākiyya*, and #25 *iktishāf*; 3 others related to colonialism: #19 *musta'mara*, #32 *isti'māriyya*, and #34 *isti'māriyya*; see Table 19, 126–7).

31 Guth 2021a (= Chapter 17), 2022 (= Chapter 9), and 2023b (= Chapter 6), with further references and a discussion of relevant previous research.

32 On the latter, cf. in particular also Dupont 2010, Hamzah, ed. 2013/2017, and Pepe 2019. On account of their self-conception, H. Sharabi called the *udabā'* "vocational intellectuals" (*Arab Intellectuals and the West*, Baltimore 1970, 4, qtd. in Gully 1997, 77).

- Nahḍa writers' emphasis on *logic* and *plausibility*, by which they underline their being *reason*-gifted subjects, capable of analyzing and explaining the world (as their object);
- the experimentation with *utopian visions* (where the subject experiences time – I briefly mentioned temporalisation above as a key feature of the Nahḍa as a *Sattelzeit* – and his/her agency as the master of history³³).

We will encounter some more indicators of an emerging subjectivity further below in this article (section III). Before we proceed to these, however, let us remember that, in Europe, the focus on the human subject and its perspective formed part and parcel of an overall process of secularisation that started with the Renaissance. The Humanist movement of the Renaissance gave increased attention to the human being because man was part of the *world*, and it was this world and the worldly that had begun to matter more than the orientation of life towards the Hereafter, as it had been the case in the Middle Ages. In the nineteenth century Middle East, similar processes of secularisation can be observed (in many sectors of society and public life, at least), processes that seek to limit the dominant influence of religion and religious institutions on the life of the human being, increasingly conceived of as an autonomous human subject (cf. Guth 2023a). As a matter of course, these processes are reflected also in the language of the Nahḍa.

3.3 Secularisation

One of the most evident indicators of the new interest in the human being is probably the emergence of newly coined terms for 'humanity' and 'humanism', such as *insāniyya*, *bashariyya*, and *ādamiyya*. All of these terms underline specifically *human* characteristics instead of referring to man and mankind by religiously connotated expressions that would underline man's dependence on God, such as *khalq* '(God's) creation/creatures' or *'ibād Allāh* 'God's servants'. And all are abstract formations in -iyya, a fact that in its turn may be interpreted as an indicator of the increasing importance of the human subject, as these terms are the result of abstraction, i.e., an operation carried out by the human subject's analytical mind. According to Monteil, in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), c. 90% of all abstract nouns are such *nisba* adjectives with a feminine ending, coined sometime

33 For the change in the perception of historical time, see, e.g., Di-Capua 2009.

during the Nahḍa.³⁴ (As we will see below, the spread of verbal nouns, *maṣādir*, can be regarded as another indicator of this process of rationalisation, i.e., subjecting human action and processuality – as expressed in inflected verbs – to intellectual conceptualisation through nominalisation.)

Insāniyya (which was borrowed into Ottoman as *insāniyet*) is such an abstract in *-iyya*, formed from *insān* ‘man, human being’. *Insān* and its plural, *(u)nās*, belong to the root *v’NS* ‘to be companionable, sociable’. Thus, the term *insāniyya* characterises man’s being the ‘sociable animal’ per se, underlining *interhuman* rather than *God-human* relations.

The etymology of *bashariyya* (> Ottoman *beşeriyet*) is not as clear as that of *insāniyya*. The underlying word to which *-iyya* is suffixed here, *bashar* ‘man, human being; men, mankind’, seems to be akin to *bashara* ‘skin’ which ultimately goes back to a Proto-Westsemitic **bašar-* ‘skin, flesh, meat’ (Kogan 2011). The original sense of *bashar* would thus have been **‘being(s) with skin/flesh’* or **‘being(s) that have skin-to-skin/flesh-to-flesh contact’*³⁵ – the latter being a more physical, and perhaps even more secular, variant of the idea of ‘sociability’ expressed in *insāniyya*. There are however at least two other major values attached to the root *vBŠR*, namely ‘good tidings’ (as in *bushrā*; cf. also *bishr* ‘joy’) and ‘to pursue, practise, carry out’ (as in vb. III, *bāshara*; cf. also *mubāshir* ‘direct; imme-

34 Cf. Monteil 1960, 122. Coining abstracts in *-iyya* was not ‘invented’ during the Nahḍa (cf. pre-modern terms like *shu’ūbiyya*, *māhiyya*, *kayfiyya*, *ubūdiyya*, *rūhāniyya*, etc.). Nevertheless, it seems that the Nahḍa witnessed an unprecedented increase in such formations, to the degree that, as Monteil has it, “une grande partie” of French abstracts in *-té* or *-isme* (often > English *-ty* or *-ism*) came to be rendered by Arabic nouns in *-iyya* (ibid., 121–122); to quote only some very few, randomly picked from the long lists provided ibid., 123–126: *thunā’iyya* ‘duality, dualism’, *jādhibiyya* ‘gravity, gravitation’, *tajribiyya* ‘empirism, pragmatism’, *ḥassāsiyya* ‘sensitivity’, *ḥay-awīyya* ‘vitality’, *dhātīyya* ‘personality, subjectivity, identity’, *ramziyya* ‘symbolism’, *mas’ūliyya* ‘responsibility’, *mashrū’iyya* ‘legitimacy’, *sha’biyya* ‘popularity’, *shakliyya* ‘formalism’, *ṭabī’iyya* ‘naturalism’, *‘adamiyya* ‘nihilism’, *‘aṣabiyya* ‘nervosity’, *‘āṭifiyya* ‘sentimentalism’, *‘aqliyya* ‘mentality’, *‘aqlāniyya* ‘rationalism’, *fardiyya* ‘individualism’, *infi’āliyya* ‘irritability, affectivity, impulsiveness’, *qābiliyya* ‘capacity, susceptibility’, *mithāliyya* ‘idealism’, *māddiyya* ‘materialism’, ‘centrality’, *imkāniyya* ‘possibility’, *nisbiyya* ‘relativity’, *ijābiyya* ‘positivism’, *waq’iyya* ‘positivism’, *mawḍū’iyya* ‘objectivity’, *wāqi’iyya* ‘realism’. – Monteil’s impression is corroborated by the evidence from Zemánek and Milička’s nineteenth-century sub-corpus where the authors found “a strong set of abstracts formed by the suffix *-iyya*§ [§ = *tā’ marbūṭa*]” ranging among the 50 most frequent nouns of 19th century Arabic vocabulary, a fact they interpret as indicators of “the beginning of a new form of writing”, comparable only to the changes that happened a thousand years earlier, in the 9th century, as a result of the “so-called ‘translation movement’, when the Arabization of Greek thought took place”; see Zemánek and Milička 2017, 122.

35 For further details, cf. entries “bašar” and “bašara” as well as root entry *vBŠR*, in my *Etym-Arab*.

diate; live'). We cannot know to which extent, if ever, the various notions resonated in the meaning of *bashariyya* when it was coined; but it is clear that none of these possible associations are religious and/or referring to the Hereafter.

Like the other two renderings of the idea of 'mankind' and 'humanity', *ādamiyya* (> Ottoman *ādemīyet*) too is an abstract in *-iyya*, in this case from *Ādam* 'Adam', significantly the name of the first human being (in the Abrahamic tradition).³⁶

As already mentioned above, the new centrality of the human being has to be seen in connection with a general process of secularisation of which it represents an integral aspect. Secularisation can however be observed in many other fields, e.g., the emergence of non-religious schools and institutions of higher education, in the increased esteem enjoyed by the natural (i.e., 'worldly') sciences as opposed to the traditional religion-based scholarship and learning and the concomitant up-valuation of the *udabā'* against the '*ulamā'*', etc.³⁷ Linguistically, it is interesting to follow not only the emergence of new vocabulary related to these fields, but also the secularisation of previously religiously connotated words. (The opening, observable for instance in al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, for the more 'worldly' '*āmmiyya* as a source for new terminology to be coined,³⁸ may be another indicator of the secularisation of the language as a whole.³⁹ Of course, this is in line with the general tendency to free Arabic from the dated 'ballast' it had inherited from the past and was still carrying along in dictionaries and grammar books due to its status as a 'holy', 'untouchable' language; instead, the language should be turned into a tool that was of more practical – 'wordly' – use now, by focusing on the essentials and getting rid of obsolete vocabulary and rules.⁴⁰)

An interesting case in point is, e.g., the old term *umma*. Although originally with all likelihood a loanword,⁴¹ *umma* has had good time to come to be felt as

³⁶ Etymologically, the name (borrowed into the Qur'ān from the Hebrew Bible) goes back to the Central Semitic noun **ʾādam*- 'human being' and is perhaps akin to Common Semitic **dam*- (> Arabic *dam*) 'blood' and the root *v*'DM 'red, ground', cf. Classical Arabic *adima* 'to be red-brown', *adīm* '(red) skin; terrestrial surface' – Huehnergard 2011.

³⁷ According to H. Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals* (see note 32, above), especially the "formative years, 1875–1914" (as the subtitle has it) were a period of "reformism and secularism" (qtd in Gully 1997, 76). – For a brief overview of secularism in the Arab world, c.f., e.g., entry "Säkularismus" in Flores 2003, 225–8.

³⁸ For some examples of new coinings where al-Ṭaḥṭāwī borrowed from the Egyptian vernacular, cf. Stowasser, in tr. Ṭaḥṭāwī [1834] 1989, 30–31, or Sawaie 2000, 404–05.

³⁹ On the debate "Classical Arabic or Colloquial" cf. the sub-section of this title in Gully 1997, 83–87.

⁴⁰ This is the main idea behind, e.g., al-Bustānī's *Muḥīṭ* (conceived as a 'modern' dictionary) or al-Shidyāq's *Jāsūs* and his textbook on grammar, *Ghunyāt al-ṭālib*; on Shidyāq, cf., e.g., Sawā'i 1999, 106–13; see also ch. 5 on "Attempts at a Simplification of the Grammar" in Stetkevych 1970, 79–94.

⁴¹ (Sumerian? >) Akkadian *ummatu*- 'people, clan, army' > Hebrew *ummā^h*, Biblical Aramaic

genuine Arabic: According to the *Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic* (DHDA), the first attestation of the word is from a verse by a pre-Islamic poet from the first half of the third century CE, i.e., even long before the Qur'ān. In this verse, *umma* seems to have the general meaning of 'any group held together by some uniting bond'. With this rather unspecific meaning, *umma* is of frequent occurrence also in the Qur'ān: according to B. Lewis, it can refer to ethnic, religious, moral, or ideological groups there. In the famous 'Constitution' of Medina, the first Islamic community is referred to as a *umma* in the ancient Arabian sense of a 'tribal confederacy', and *umma* was used with this or a similar meaning also during the lifetime of the Prophet (Lewis 1988/1991, 32). The word could have both religious and ethnic connotations also for centuries after Mohammed's death. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, however, a semantic shift can be observed:

Increasingly, [...] Muslim writers came to speak of a single *umma* of the Muslims, without ethnic or regional subdivisions, and when they speak of other *ummas* (the Arabic plural is *umam*), these are usually religious groups such as, for example, the Christians or the Zoroastrians. They may also be ethnic nations, such as the Franks or the Slavs, though from late medieval times *umma* is rarely used of ethnic groups within Islam.

(ibid.)

Thus, in premodern times the concept was de-territorialised and de-ethnicised in meaning, and religionised instead, to signify, in general, an exclusively *Muslim* community, with also the consequence that "Muslims would be part of the *umma* regardless of whether they lived within Muslim-ruled territory" (Ali and Leaman 2008, 147).

In the context of our investigation, however, it is still more important that yet another semantic shift happened with the advent of modernity. After *umma* had come to be understood widely as an essentially *religious* group, signifying the universal community of all Muslims, the word now also began to serve as a rendering of the modern concept of French *nation*, increasingly conceived in a *secular, non-religious* sense, though the latter often still overlapped with the religious aspect. Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī, for instance, in his famous treatise on "The Eight Key Concepts" of his time (*R. al-Kalim al-thamān*, 1880/81), described *umma* as a group of people united by linguistic and territorial *as well as* religious bonds (*lisān, makān, dīn*), with language being the most important element because it creates the strongest social cohesion between human beings (cf. Delanoue 1963, 10).

Thus, the semantic development of the term *umma* can serve as an example

ummā 'nation, race, people', Judeo-Palestinian *ummatā* – cf. DRS s.v. "MM-2"; Jeffery 1938, 69; Pennacchio 2014, 158; Huehnergard 2011.

of an at least partly (re-) secularisation having taken place during the Nahḍa, a process that is quite common in the context of modernisation.⁴² It can, for instance, be observed also with another originally mainly religiously-connotated term with which *umma* competed for some time to express the secular idea of ‘nation’ – *milla* (Rebhan 1986, 121). In the Qur’ān (where *milla*, like *umma*, is a loanword⁴³), it still means ‘religion, creed, form of belief’.⁴⁴ But this term too underwent considerable semantic change during the Nahḍa. Initially, since the 1830s, it was preferred over *umma* to render the French *nation*, probably on account of the fact that *umma* at the time still had mostly *Islamic* connotations while *milla* could refer also to non-Muslim religious communities.⁴⁵ It was only after some decades that *umma* superseded and eventually replaced *milla* as an equivalent of ‘nation’ – perhaps, as Rebhan thinks, due to the fact that, traditionally, *milla* referred to smaller units while *umma* was more comprehensive. Moreover, as we have seen above, *umma* had undergone, since the 1870s, a process of generalisation, expanding from the religious sphere to include groups sharing a language, culture and/or territory.⁴⁶ When *umma* overtook as equivalent of ‘nation’, *milla* receded in this function and was reduced again to its earlier, narrower meaning – in Arabic, at least; in Persian and Turkish, *mellat/millet* has retained the secular meaning the word had acquired earlier and has remained the standard term for ‘nation’ to the present day, while an Arabic expression like *ḥuqūq al-milal*, still given in Wahrmund’s dictionary of 1887 as the translation of ‘Völkerrecht’ (inter-national law), has become obsolete today.

Secularisation is evident also in the change the term *tarbiya* ‘education, upbringing; teaching, instruction; pedagogy’ underwent during the Nahḍa. Before its contact with modern concepts of education, learning, and science, traditional

42 Cf. Lewis’s remark that “Arabs, Persians, and Turks alike preferred to take old terms, with a religious [!] meaning, and refurbish them to meet the new [secular] need[s]” – Lewis 1988, 41.

43 According to Jeffery 1938, 268–69, it is from Syriac *mellā*, *mellatā* ‘word, ῥῆμα’, but also ‘λόγος’. – DHDA gives Qur’ān 16: 123 as the first attestation: “And afterward We inspired thee (Muhammad, saying): ‘Follow the religion of Abraham (*millata Ibrāhima*), as one by nature upright [...]’.”

44 Jeffery explains the semantic shift from ‘word, ῥῆμα, λόγος’ to ‘religion, creed’ as due to the fact that the Syriac *mellā*, *mellatā* was also “used technically for ‘religion’” – Jeffery 1938, 268–69, following Nöldeke and others.

45 In the Ottoman Empire, *millet* was a “technical term, [...] used for the organised, recognised, religio-political communities enjoying certain rights of autonomy under their own chiefs. / [...] the primary basis was religious rather than ethnic. [...] It was not until a very late date, and under the influence of European nationalist ideas, that separate ethnic millets began to appear” – Lewis 1988/1991, 38–39.

46 Lewis 1988/1991, 34.

Islamic *tarbiya* had a mainly “otherworldly orientation”, used “curricula largely unchanged since medieval times” and treated knowledge

as something to be revealed because of a divine command. The questioning of what [was] taught [was] then unwelcome, teaching styles [were often] authoritarian, education [was] mainly undifferentiated, and memorisation [was] important. By contrast, modern education [had] an *orientation towards this world* [my emphasis], and claim[ed] to be directed towards the development of the individual pupil [see above, passim, about the new focus on the subject]. Curricula change[d] as the subject matter change[d], and knowledge [was] acquired through empirical [= *worldly*, fact-oriented!] or deductive methods [see above, on the *reasoning* subject] [...]. [...] The different subjects [were] clearly distinct from each other, by contrast with the fairly unified notion of religious education.

(Ali and Leaman, eds. 2008, 29–31)

3.4 The subject’s agency

As already mentioned above, processes of abstraction as expressed in the many new ‘-isms’ in *-iyya* should, in my opinion, be read as an indicator of the emerging subject’s desire to demonstrate its capability of conceptionalising and, hence, also mastering the world as its object. Another way of subjecting the world to human reason is conceptualisation by way of deriving verbal nouns, *maṣādir* (sg. *maṣdar*), from all kinds of verbs. We have already seen examples of such terms above, coined on the self-referential patterns *taFa’uL*, *iFti’āL* and *istiF’āL* (forms V, VIII, X). But there are many others, among which also those that emphasise the subject’s agency rather than self-referentiality, in particular verbal nouns of forms II (*taF’iL*, *taF’iLa*) and IV (*iF’āL*). Most of these have a causative meaning, in this way underlining the subject’s agency, its own ‘causality’.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Cf., e.g., for form II: *ta’tθir* ‘influence’ (and electrical ‘induction’), *ta’dīb* ‘disciplining’, *ta’mīn* ‘assurance’, *tajdid* ‘renewal, renovation’, *tajrīb* ‘trial, testing out’, *tajriba* ‘experience’, *tajrīd* ‘abstraction’, *taḥqīq* ‘realisation, implementation’, *taḥlīl* ‘analysis’, *takḥḥīṭ* ‘planning’, *tadbīr* ‘management, measure’, *tadrīj* ‘gradual advancement/progress’ (< *‘to cause to climb the steps, *da-raja*’), *tarkīb* ‘synthesis, composition, structure’, *tasrī* ‘acceleration’, *tashjī* ‘encouragement’, *tashkīl* ‘formation’, *taṣmīm* ‘planning, design’, *taṭbīq* ‘application’, *ta’qīm* ‘sterilisation’, *taqḥīr* ‘distillation’ (< *‘to make fall in drops, *qaṭr*’), *taqlīd* ‘imitation, emulation’ (< *‘to follow s.o. like one pearl the other in a necklace, *qīlāda*’), *takḥīf* ‘condensation’, *tamrīn* ‘training, practise, exercise’ (< *‘to make flexible, *marīn*’), *tansīq* ‘coordination’ (< *‘to arrange in proper order, *nasaq*’), *tanwīm* ‘hypnosis’, *tawqīt* ‘timing, schedule’; and for form IV: *iḥṣā* ‘statistics’ (< *‘to operate a calculator’, based on *ḥaṣan* ‘pebbles, little stones’), *ikhrāj* ‘production’, *intāj* ‘production’ (< *‘to make bring forth, *nataja*’), *inshā* ‘construction, building, erection’, *irād* ‘revenue’ (< *‘to cause to come in, *warada*’). – For the semantics of forms II and IV in general, cf., e.g., Larcher 2011, section 3.1.3.1 (“Forms without *l*”).

Again, as long as we are lacking machine-readable and searchable large-scale corpora of representative Nahḍa texts, any statement about the valiance of linguistic data cannot be other than impressionistic and preliminary, awaiting confirmation or falsification through reliable lexicostatistic data. Yet, one should not underestimate the results that have already been obtained on the basis of still relatively small sub-corpora like Zemánek and Milička's, nor the impressions formed earlier by experienced scholars, based on many years of close reading of huge amounts of a large variety of source texts. It is therefore probably not completely misleading to have a look at Vincent Monteil's findings in his seminal study of the genesis of *L'arabe moderne*. It seems to be quite significant in the context of our investigation that Monteil states that modern Arabic "fait un usage massif [!]" (Monteil 1960, 111) of all kinds of verbal nouns of derived verb stems. And it is equally significant that he calls these nouns "noms d'action" (ibid.), combining the abstraction implied in the derivation of nouns and the "action" expressed by the underlying verbs. In an attempt to form a rough idea about the frequency of *maṣḍar* items in Nahḍa texts, Monteil undertook a small-scale statistical analysis. In Hans Wehr's *Dictionary* (first ed. 1956), he skimmed the c. 1,300 entries with 'ayn as first root consonant (c. 160 verbal roots) for all *maṣḍars* II–X. The table below summarises his results:⁴⁸

form	vn.s out of 1,300 entries	‰ of 1,300	% of all vn.s. of derived stems
II	35	26.92 ‰	23.6 %
III	21	16.15 ‰	14.2 %
IV	19	14.62 ‰	12.8 %
V	24	18.46 ‰	16.2 %
VI	9	6.92 ‰	6.1 %
VII	5	3.85 ‰	3.4 %
VIII	19	14.62 ‰	12.8 %
X	16	12.31 ‰	10.8 %
total	148	113.85 ‰	100.0 %

⁴⁸ The figures in the second column are Monteil's (1960, 111), those in the other columns my own calculations based on Monteil's findings.

If Monteil's findings reflect actual language usage – a big caveat is in place here, as he counted only dictionary entries, not frequency in 'real' texts⁴⁹ – the verbal nouns II–X amount to c. 11.4 % of all vocabulary items of MSA. Out of these, c. two fifths are provided by the self-referential forms V, VIII, and X (16.2 % + 12.8 % + 10.8 % = 39.9 %), while a little bit less (36.5 %) are the causative verbal nouns II and IV (23.6 % + 12.8 %).⁵⁰

In section I, we mentioned briefly that *taraqqī*, *taqaddum*, *tamaddun* and similar verbal nouns V not only are self-referential, but also retain the causativity of the corresponding form II verbs (*raqqā*, *qaddama*, *maddana*, etc.) from which they are extensions in *t*-. Causativity implies causality, and causality emphasises, as we said, the subject's pro-activity, its capability to make things happen. However, it also implies change – fitting very well into the picture of an age of modernisation and reform –, and change can only be effected in time – a strong indicator of temporalisation that is typical of a Koselleckian *Sattelzeit*.⁵¹ Limitation of space does not allow me to treat this aspect in more detail; but cf., e.g., *tarbiya*, treated above in the context of secularisation: as a vn. II, *tarbiya* clearly carries with it the spirit of the Nahḍa, its belief in the changeability of the world through the subject's agency.⁵² The same holds for the form IV vn. *iṣlāḥ* and the form II vn. (Ottoman Turkish) *tanẓīmāt*, both key terms of the period and both causative formations implying human effort to restore a previous ideal order (*ṣalāḥ*, *niẓām*) which in itself may be of divine origin and still have a 'heavenly' connotation,⁵³ but restoration will, of course, be secular, happening on earth. In the context of *iṣlāḥ* and *tanẓīmāt*, also language reform was discussed, significantly often under titles implying temporalisation, like "The future [!] of the Arabic language" (*Mustaqbal al-lugha al-‘arabiyya*)⁵⁴ or

⁴⁹ On the other hand, an advantage of this approach is that it does not count those instances in which the *maṣḍar* is used verbally, as 'infinitive' of the corresponding verb; rather, it registers usage as an abstract term that has obtained the status of a distinct lexeme.

⁵⁰ Verbal nouns IX (for colours, etc.) are left out of consideration here as they are of insignificant frequency. Form III and its correspondent in *t*-, form VI, are not included in our discussion either as their semantics (III: associative, applicative; VI: reciprocal, etc.) are not as strongly subject-related as those of the other forms. I would not go so far as to interpret associativeness and reciprocity as inter-subjectivity. – It is significant that also the 'passive' vn.s VII play an almost negligible role.

⁵¹ See above, note 19.

⁵² No wonder then that the discussion of *tarbiya* takes almost 50 % of al-Marṣafī's book on *The Eight Key Concepts* of his time and also comes at the end, as its culmination; see Delanoue 1963.

⁵³ *ṣalāḥ* is a Qur'ānic term and also appears in the Muslim prayer call, *adhān*. For *niẓām*, cf. already the "New Order" (*niẓām-ı cedid*) proclaimed by Sultan Selim III in 1793.

⁵⁴ Gully 1997, 76 and passim. Of course, also *ta'rib* (another vn. III!) 'Arabisation' (see *ibid.*, 87

“Arabic as a living being, subject to evolution [!]”.⁵⁵

However, concepts need not be of the *taF‘iL* and *iF‘āL* type in order to express pro-activity and agency. In the remaining part of this paper, I will briefly discuss some terms that do not have specific morphological features, yet display similar semantics. Here, a deepened understanding may be reached via heightened attention paid to relevant lexicographical data and basic root meanings.

There is, first of all, the word *nahḍa* itself. It is used today to refer to both the process and the period of the cultural ‘revival’ of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century, the *Nahḍa*, with capital ‘N’. The word is not attested with this specific conceptual meaning in Arabic dictionaries until quite lately – my earliest reference so far is, in fact, Wehr’s dictionary. However, the value ‘(esp. national) awakening, upswing, advancement, progress’ appears already around 1860 (e.g., in the introduction to the Lebanese writer Khalil al-Khūrī’s novel *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji!*).⁵⁶ Particularly interesting is the fact that the underlying verb, *nahaḍa*, does not only mean ‘to rise, get up, stand up’ (and *nahḍa* thus an ‘act of rising’), but also ‘to start’, so that *nahḍa* also is a ‘departure’,⁵⁷ combined with *ilā* also a ‘rush(ing) towards x’, a sudden and energetic ‘movement’ (*ḥaraka*), as Bustānī characterizes it. Perhaps, the suddenness and energy inherent in such an act⁵⁸ can explain that *nahḍa* also can mean ‘power, ability, strength’⁵⁹ and, occasionally, an ‘act of violence’ or wrong-doing (Steingass 1884). The active participle *nāhiḍ* means ‘energetic, sharp, vigorous, effective in one’s agency or work’ (Lane).⁶⁰ This energy, vigour, strength – or, as Tomiche calls it, the “active [!] perspective”⁶¹ – implied in the ‘rising’ and ‘rushing towards/against (a goal)’ is obviously at the heart of the ‘movement’, *nahḍa*, that in the second half of the nineteenth century comes to be opposed to ‘petrification, stagnation’ (*jumūd*) and ‘decay’ (*inḥitāṭ*); “[o]n chérit tout ce qui évoque ‘l’évolution’ (*taṭawwur*), le ‘progrès’ (*taqaddum*, *taraqqī*), ‘l’avenir’

ff.) is part of this ‘causative’ project.

55 J. Zaydān, *al-Lughā al-‘arabiyya kā’in ḥayy khādi’ li-nāmūs al-irtiqā’*, 1904, new ed. by M. Kāmil, Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1960. Partial translation in Philipp 2014, 226–38.

56 For a detailed survey of the term *n/Nahḍa* from the nineteenth century until our days, cf. Deuchar 2017.

57 Steingass 1884; cf. also Zenker 1866/76 [*nahḥ*], and Wahrmund 1887: ‘Aufstehen; Aufbrechen, Aufbruch, Abreise’.

58 Cf. also Kazimirski 1860/1875: ‘avec promptitude’.

59 Lane 1863ff; Hava 1898; cf. also Bustānī, *Quṭr al-muḥiṭ*: ‘ṭāqa wa-quwwa’.

60 Lane, *op.cit.*

61 Tomiche 1992/2012.

(*mustaqbal*) ou le ‘devenir’ (*maṣīr*, *ṣayūra*). On méprise le *taqlīd* – ‘conformisme, imitation servile’, le ‘fatalisme’”.⁶² The most adequate rendering of *Nahḍa* as the term for the nineteenth century intellectual movement is therefore probably ‘(the Age/Period of) Upswing’.⁶³

The experience of the subject’s agency, its capability to actively manage its own affairs and reform its present, with progress towards a brighter future in mind, is probably also the reason behind the change of the terminology used in Arabic to express the idea of ‘revolution’, today generally rendered by *thawra*. To quote again Lewis:

Fitna was the term used by the first Muslim writers who discussed the French Revolution of 1789, and did not like it. When Muslim writers, in the course of the nineteenth century, began to speak more favorably of revolutions, they coined new words or reconditioned old words to denote them. Ottoman Turkish, followed by Persian, used *inqilāb*, an Arabic verbal noun with the literal meaning of ‘turning around.’ In Arabic *inqilāb* acquired a rather negative meaning, with a connotation of coup d’état or putsch, and the positive term for revolution was *thawra*, which in classical usage variously meant ‘rising,’ ‘excitement,’ ‘rebellion,’ or ‘secession.’ It is now the universal Arabic term for good or approved revolutions.

(Lewis 1988, 96)⁶⁴

The process described by Lewis can be explained with the categories introduced above. The first shift, from *fitna* to *inqilāb*, reflects a process of secularisation: the highly religiously-loaden *fitna*⁶⁵ is replaced by the more neutral and ‘worldly’ *inqilāb* (‘cataclysm, turnover, turn’, used already in the 9th century CE by al-Kindī in his astrological writings⁶⁶). The second shift, from *inqilāb* to *thawra*, marks the period when people became more and more curious to know *who* was responsible for (i.e., the cause behind) the ‘cataclysm, turnover’. While other modernist terminology is eager to highlight the agency of the emerging subject, the passive *inqalaba* does not. To me, exactly this is the reason why *inqilāb*, though originally an Arabic coining, never became rooted in Arabic as an equivalent of ‘revolution’. When Arab intellectuals began to feel

⁶² Monteil 1860, 321.

⁶³ Cf. Tomiche’s critical remark on rendering *Nahḍa* as ‘Renaissance’ as “Euro-centrist” – Tomiche 1992/2012.

⁶⁴ Lewis 1988/1991, 96. – Cf. also Ayalon’s detailed article “From Fitna to Thawra” (Ayalon 1987b).

⁶⁵ Cf., e.g., Ali & Leaman, *Islam*, 39–40.

⁶⁶ Rebhan 1986, n. 51.

that they had an agency, *inqilāb* started to become obsolete and the more 'energetic' *thawra* came into use – significantly, this was, according to Rebhan, during the last third of the nineteenth century.⁶⁷

While *nahḍa* and *thawra* mainly point to activities of the emerging subject, other terms characterize the *qualities* that gained specific relevance in the process of a 'subjectivation' of the Arab human being's world-view. One of these terms, *hawas* 'madness, ecstasy, fancy, passion',⁶⁸ is promoted for the first time by Khalīl al-Khūrī in his *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji!* (1859, mentioned above as one of the first to speak of a 'national *nahḍa*').⁶⁹ In the programmatic preface to the novel, the author introduces a new aesthetics⁷⁰ when he calls for a literature that not only should contain the "truth" (*ḥaqīqa*), but also be driven by "passion" (*hawas*); while observing logic and plausibility – al-Khūrī here appeals to the reader as the intellectual, the *reasoning* subject – , the writer should at the same time speak "like a drunken person" (*ka-sakrān*) in order to talk to the heart (lit., "make an impression on the soul", *yu'aththir bi-l-nafs*). Interestingly enough, the author believes that the best way for a writer to achieve this goal is to "make people feel what *he himself* feels" (al-Khūrī 1860, 20; my emphasis), on the condition, however, that the writer never give up his "individual independence and freedom" (*istiqlāl dhātī, ḥurriyya*) nor "sell the truth" (ibid., 21). – Al-Khūrī develops his aesthetics via a comparison between a poem by al-Mutanabbī and another by Lamartine. While he criticizes Lamartine's lack of realism, he also discards al-Mutanabbī's dry artificiality and his lack of authentic feeling. In conclusion, al-Khūrī underlines the necessity of both, realism *and*

67 Rebhan 1986, 111. – In Persian and Turkish, into which Arabic *inqilāb* had been loaned at an early stage, the terms *enqelāb* and *inkilāp* were retained, probably because it was a foreign word; unlike native Arabs, the speakers of Persian and Turkish were neither aware of the semantic history nor sensitive to the 'passivity' of the term's morphology.

68 Kazimirski, *op.cit.*, translates *hawas* as 'désir ardent, passion, manie de...'; Wahrmond, *op.cit.*, has 'leidenschaftliche Begierde, Passion; Manie; Ehnsucht; Lust, Vergnügen, Unterhaltung; Thorheit, Tollheit; (mod.) Leichtsinn'; and Hava, *Arabic-English Dictionary*, gives 'light-headedness, giddiness, insanity; violent desire, passion; hope'. – In MSA, the meaning as given by Wehr/Cowan 1979/1994 is 'foolishness, folly, craze, madness; dreaminess, visionariness, rapture, ecstasy; wild fancy, fantasy; raving madness, frenzy; infatuation, blindness, delusion; mania (psych.)'.

69 For a detailed study of this text, cf. Wielandt, *Das Bild der Europäer*; Guth 2003b, 10–47 (and passim, esp. §82e); id. 2019/20 [= Chapter 7], passim, as well as the introductions to the two extant print editions (see Bibliography s.v. al-Khūrī).

70 For more about this aesthetics, cf. Guth 2022 [= Chapter 9].

feeling.⁷¹ Can one think of a nicer proof of emerging subjectivity: writer and reader imagined as subjects endowed with reason *and* emotion?

The term al-Khūrī uses to express ‘truth’, *ḥaqīqa*, is itself worth briefly dwelling upon. It belongs to the semantic complex of *ḥaqq* ‘truth; correctness; rightful possession; right, legal claim; (adj.) true, real; right’.⁷² Both *ḥaqq* and *ḥaqīqa* can express the concept of ‘truth’. But when *ḥaqq* does so, it is religiously connotated: in Islamic tradition, ‘the’ (absolute) truth is generally equated with God, *al-Ḥaqq*. In contrast, *ḥaqīqa* describes a more subjective ‘truth’, the truth as it appears to the human intellect that tries to grasp it. Morphologically, *ḥaqīqa* can be analysed as a quasi-passive participle (*Faʿīl*),⁷³ literally meaning something like ‘discerned, confirmed (sc. by the human intellect)’, thus the *object* of the *subject’s* activity. I would argue that al-Khūrī prefers *al-ḥaqīqa* over *al-ḥaqq* for exactly these two reasons: its ‘worldliness’ and its subjectivity,⁷⁴ as *adab* now also increasingly comes to mean the *adīb’s* capability to make choices and serve as a guide who helps to master the challenges of modernity (Guth 2019/20 = Chapter 4). – At the same time, in al-Khūrī’s aesthetic programme of “truth mingled with passion”, *al-ḥaqīqa* represents, of course, the intellectual counterpart of emotion and affect as well as the empirical, facts-oriented mind of the secular thinker – important other components of emerging subjectivity, as we saw above.

Last but not least, a re-conceptualisation with emphasis on the subject’s

71 For the self-asserting function of emotionalism as a widespread phenomenon of late nineteenth, early twentieth century, cf. my essay “*Fa-ghrawraqat ‘uyūnuhum bi-d-dumū’ ...*”.

72 Etymologically, Arabic ḤQQ seems to go back to a West-Semitic *ḤQQ ‘to cut into; to level, make correct; to decree’ (Huehnergard, “Proto-Semitic Language and Culture”). To see the link between ‘cutting’ and ‘right, truth’ we have to imagine a right or the truth as something ‘written down/cut in stone’, and a duty or an obligation as something ‘prescribed < inscribed, engraved’. The value ‘to cut in, inscribe’ is attested in Hebrew, Phoenician, Judeo-Palestinian Aramaic and Syriac. All of these also show the additional meaning ‘to prescribe, order, decree’ (which is found alone also in Epigraphic and Modern South Arabian as well as in Ethiopian Semitic), cf. DRS #ḤQQ-2. DRS is reluctant to make the latter value dependent on the former, but others (like Huehnergard) take it as a given.

73 In some Semitic languages, e.g., Aramaic, the *Faʿīl* pattern is the default pattern of the passive participle of the form I verb. In Arabic, the pattern is not productive any longer, but the language has preserved many ‘adjectives’ with recognisably passive meaning, such as *qatīl* ‘dead, fallen (< *killed)’, *fariq* ‘separated’, *ṣadiq* ‘trusted in, reliable’, etc.

74 Cf. Avicenna’s use of *ḥaqīqa* in the sense of Latin *certitudo*, i.e., the reality/truth of a thing in the intellect; it is this certitude which assures a thing’s *esse proprium*, its actual being what it is. In contrast, *ḥaqq* is used for anything that is determined and fixed – Courtine & Rijksbaron, “Tò tí ên eīnai”, 1298.

agency can be observed also through the term *fann*.⁷⁵ In MSA, the two most frequent senses of the word are 'art' or (esp. in the plural, *funūn*) 'discipline'. In a few formulaic expressions it is also still used in the meaning it generally had in earlier times, namely 'sort, kind, species, variety', cf., e.g., the popular saying *al-junūn funūn* 'insanity has many varieties, manifests itself in many ways', or the plural *afānīn min...* 'all kinds of, sundry, various'. In the corresponding *nisba* adjective, *fannī*, modern usage has still preserved also the value 'technique' (cf., e.g., *tadrib fannī* 'vocational training') that *fann* used to have for a long time in the nineteenth/twentieth century before 'technique' came to be expressed preferably by the neologism *tak(a)niyya* or *taq(a)niyya* (cf. Monteil 1960, 171–72).

The value 'art', or better 'Art', with a capital 'A', i.e., 'Fine Art', is not attested before the nineteenth century. When nineteenth century dictionaries mention 'art' as one of the possible English renderings of *fann*, they usually mean 'skilled craftsmanship, knowledge', not 'Art' in the modern sense of a creative activity expressing a person's imaginative, conceptual ideas, a conception that, in European modernity, is

associated with the emergence of the artist as a distinct social or professional role, the cult of artistic genius and inspiration, the elevation of the work of art to quasi-sacred status as a fetish object, and the rise of aesthetics and aesthetic judgment as distinct faculties for the perception of works of art.

(Mitchell 2005, 6)

The expansion of the classical range of meanings of *fann* to include the modern notion of '(creative, fine) Art' was possible, it seems, via the idea, itself attested as early as the mid-eighth century CE,⁷⁶ of 'skillfully entertaining variegation, branching out in many different directions, diversification, esp. in the use of rhetoric devices in one's speech'. The latter aspect was particularly present in the derived *t*-stems, e.g., form VIII: *iftanna fī ḥadīthih/khuṭbatih* 'he produced, or gave utterance to, various sorts and ways of speech, [i.e., he diversified,] in his narration, or discourse, and in his oration, or harangue', or form V: *tafannana fī l-'ulūm* 'he was, or became, possessed of various acquirements in the sciences', *tafannana fī l-kalām* 'he practised, or took to, various modes, or manners, in speech; he diversified therein'.⁷⁷ When the European Romanticists' understanding of 'Art' began to take hold in the Middle East, artistic creativity

⁷⁵ For a detailed description of the term's semantic history, cf. Mestyan 2011.

⁷⁶ *DHDA* mentions a *ḥadīth* from a collection tentatively dated 767 CE.

⁷⁷ Lane, *op.cit.*, vol. vi, s.r. *f-n-n*.

thus appears to have been associated, in the first place, with the inventiveness needed for diversification and variation in a skill or profession or in speaking and writing, an inventiveness that, via the reflexive *t*-morpheme of forms V and VIII, could easily be related to the agency of the emerging subject.

3.5 In lieu of a conclusion

In the above chapter I have, hopefully, succeeded in proposing the potential usefulness of a closer look into the etymology, semantics and morphology of Nahḍa terminology as reflections of several key traits of the period, or the Nahḍa “project” (as Junge 2019a, 24–5, has it), particularly secularisation and a focus on the human subject and its manifold types of agency (implying temporalisation). Given the all-encompassing relevance of language for the study of the ‘long nineteenth century’ as well as the key traits just mentioned and, on the other hand, the impossibility of treating more than a few within the confines of a book chapter, I have to leave it to the interested reader to test the ultimate tenability of my suggestions and explore their possible consequences. I would be happy if colleagues working on the conceptual history of the Nahḍa would consider including ‘my’ perspective in their current work, asking whether it may make sense in the light of their own findings and perhaps add some useful complementary aspects. The subfields of conceptual history and Nahḍa Studies where this may be done are as diverse as emerging subjectivity itself: as mentioned above, the new world view is an increasingly secularised and, due to temporalisation, also an increasingly historicizing one, and the ‘typical’ Nahḍawi is eager to assert him/herself as a rational, critically observing, analyzing and evaluating being, creative, visionary, independent (more and more also in a wider, ethnical, political and/or cultural sense), actively contributing to ‘progress’, but also ‘feeling’ him/herself and capable of passing judgments of good taste.⁷⁸ All this is expressed through language, and language use therefore is a key source of gaining knowledge about the period/movement.

It is clear, however, that the above suggestions still also need further corroboration, especially by modern computer-supported lexicostatistics and a thorough scrutinisation of statements made by the protagonists themselves about the criteria and considerations that informed their decisions in the process of coining

⁷⁸ On taste, *dhawq*, as a key concept related to the subject’s faculty of aesthetic and moral judgment, see Abou-Hodeib 2017, esp. ch.s 2 and 5 (with discussion of the concept’s entanglement with mid- to late-nineteenth century Beirut “middle-class domesticity”).

new vocabulary,⁷⁹ as well as the interplay between several factors, including secularization motivated by political conditions and ideas, like (proto-) nationalism. I would be more than happy to see that my ideas inspired further research in these directions, but also on other grammatical patterns than the ones mentioned in this article (e.g., *miF'aL*, *miF'āL*, *Fā'il(a)*, *Fā'ūL* for instruments, tools, etc., i.e., new devices of actively dealing with the world).

79 In addition, discussions like the one by R.R. al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (qtd. above, fn. 7) on the adequate Arabic rendering of French *théâtre* or *spectacles*, highly giving sources in this respect could be newspaper/journal articles, encyclopedia entries, linguistic treatises, proceedings of the meetings of the language academies, etc.

Part III: **Transitions: Continuity and rupture**

New attitudes / genres in the making

4 *Adab* as the art to make the right choice between local tradition and Western values

A comparative analysis of Khalīl al-Khūrī's *Way, idhan lastu bi-lfranjī!* (1859) and Aḥmed Midḥat's *Felāṭūn Beğ ile Rāḳım Efendī* (1875), or: On the threshold of inventing national Middle Eastern cultures

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This chapter: After having had a look, in the preceding chapter, into the more properly linguistic aspects of the Nahḍa – the morpho-semantics of key Nahḍa terminology – Chapter 4 will now open a section that seeks to ‘zoom in’ on how some key concepts were used by the emerging/emerged subjects to process the changing world around them, both mentally and emotionally. As already mentioned towards the end of Chapter 3, Nahḍa language had not only to coin new terms (with the help of the devices discussed in Chapter 3) but very often also used existing terms to describe, analyse, criticise, lament, etc., this rapidly changing world. One of these old terms – actually an extremely old one, with a centuries-old history – is *adab*. It so happened that most of the voices of emerging subjectivity that we know of were public writers (sg. *kātib* ‘āmm) who belonged to the group of educated, learned people called *udabā'* (sg. *adīb*), a term that is usually rendered as “literati” in English, or “*hommes de lettres*” in French, and which, analysed in terms of its morpho-semantics, i.e., as a *Fa'īl* noun, originally means “someone in whom a lot of *adab* is concentrated”, “someone possessing plenty of *adab*”, or simply “person of *adab*”. What is this *adab*? As we said, the term is very old and, as such, it can also look back on a long history of semantic development. Heribert Horst has summarised this development as follows: “Tradition → traditionelle (Herzens- und Verstandes-) Bildung → Bildung → Bildungsliteratur → Literatur”.¹

¹ In my own approximative English translation: “tradition → tradition-informed formation (of the heart and mind) → formation, learning, cultivation (in general) → writings on formation, learning, culture (in general) → literature” – Horst 1987, 208. – Horst is aware of the shortcomings of this summary, which in fact is a ‘summary of a summary’, namely of the chart into which

As these definitions show, *adab* is basically a type of cultural *knowledge*, acquired through education and learning; knowledge about things, persons, customs, norms, etc., that helps to do things properly. This essential function has not changed over the centuries, though, evidently, the variable has been filled with various meanings in the course of time, reflecting its modified function in changing societies. While medieval handbooks about *adab al-mulūk* or *adab al-qāḍī* sought to supply the reader/user with all that was needed to do a proper job as a king or judge, the type of knowledge that is needed during the Nahḍa and that the modern *adīb* is expected to provide is concerned mainly with the greatest challenge of the time, that is, the difficult navigation between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’. The fact that *adab* mainly is a type of *knowledge* triggers, it is clear, mostly the mental, rational capacities of the emerging/emerged subject: the *adīb* is approached as a critical analyst of the world, a person who knows the old traditions as well as the many new, ‘modern’ and progressive ideas and objects that have flooded the East, so that within a short time two antagonistic systems, or world orders, have begun to compete with each other and it has become very difficult to navigate between the two, each coming with its own centuries-old complex set of rules, norms, and laws, as well as not-to-dos, restrictions, taboos, etc. However, as much as *adab* is about providing the right knowledge and a matter of the critical, analytic mind, as much it is also about feelings, due to the complexity and intensity of the dilemma Middle Eastern subjects find themselves in during this crucial period. While medieval handbooks and *adab* encyclopaedias still could treat their topics in a rather ‘cool’ way, in the style of learned treatises, this type of handbooks and encyclopaedias is now, during the Nahḍa, gradually being replaced by *novels*, and the *adīb* is not only transforming into a *kātib ‘āmm* (public writer and intellectual), but also into a novelist and playwright.

This Chapter 4 presents two of the very earliest examples of novelistic writing in the Middle East, one Arabic and one Turkish (in this way demonstrating the general *Middle Eastern*, not only Arabic dimension of the phenomena that will be addressed).² The chapter will, however, not so much focus on the challenges the new *genre* posed as such, i.e., on what it meant for the new *udabā’* to design *novels*;³ rather, it will present in some detail the many aspects of Middle Eastern life – material (objects, artefacts), intellectual, ideological, psychological, ethical,

Carlo Alfonso Nallino (1872–1938) tried to squeeze the essential findings of his seminal twenty-pages study (Nallino 1948).

² Other chapters of the present book that will widen the perspective to include a Turkish dimension are especially Chapters 6, 15, 18, and 19.

³ For a discussion of questions related to the new genre itself, conform below Chapters 6 and 7.

and more – that are discussed, or better: staged, in the texts. I will do so with the aim of conveying to the reader of this chapter an idea of the breadth and multitude of everyday questions that Middle Eastern subjects saw themselves confronted with, and hence also of the intensity of emotional engagement and the urgency of psychological pressure this confrontation exerted on the subjects (in a way, the chapter therefore is about the power of the *objects*). The fact that the world was changing so rapidly and to such a large and deep extent was not something that could simply be understood, grasped intellectually and digested mentally; rather, it was something *felt*, lived, experienced *physically*, i.e., *embodied*, in almost every moment of daily life, and this is why *adab* now also became a stage for the exemplary enactment of ethical and emotional conflicts, of dramas of morality, questions of identity, honour and shame, virtue, dignity, and other aspects, including the explicit expression of painfully disturbing as well as pleasantly enjoyed emotions and sentiments. *Adab* was no longer catering only to certain professions or dealing with ‘luxurious’ matters of a court elite (such as the refined art of courtly love, treated in Ibn Ḥazm’s famous *Tawq al-ḥamāma*, “The Dove’s Necklace”); now, *adab* was becoming a vehicle for the negotiation of pressing issues of everybody’s life, including deeply felt psychological-emotional crises. This aspect of emotionalism – a key marker of emerging subjectivity and the human beings’ wish to assert themselves – will be addressed towards the end of this chapter, but is discussed in more detail in other chapters below, especially Chapters 9 and 11 (and to some extent also Chapter 10).

As can be expected from the chapter’s title, the Nahḍawī *adīb* will be introduced here as a kind of arbiter, a person who regards himself, and is regarded by the readership, as capable of making the right choice between an inherited set of values and a new, Western one. The detailed presentation of these values as discussed by Khalīl al-Khūrī and Aḥmed Midḥat will, however, not only illustrate several modes of emerging subjects’ desire for self-affirmation. It will also show that, in the texts under discussion, emerging subjectivity appears, first and foremost, as a phenomenon of an emerging *middle class* that seeks to establish itself as a new social player, a voice that should be heard, and a group that should be granted an authoritative, guiding position in society. The comparison of an Arabic text with a (roughly) contemporaneous Turkish one will demonstrate that the Arabic Nahḍa is only one out of several other *Middle Eastern* variants of very similar phenomena, and the fact that both authors at about the same time discuss two competing sets of values that appear as two different ‘systems’ or ‘orders of things’ nicely demonstrates, again, that the ‘global’ period of Reproductionism

in which the Middle Eastern mid-nineteenth century participates,⁴ is a period in which individuals (in their subjectivity, aspiring to something new) deal with large complex *systems* or *orders of things* that appear as sets of rules, norms, or laws that claim general validity and obedience. We will, again, see that the individual emerging/emerged subject is already strong enough to critically ponder the pros and cons and make an informed choice (a good indicator of this strength is often the satirical mode in which the rejected aspects of the new order are ridiculed); the result of this choice, however, does still not consist in a radical rupture with the existing order but rather in an individually adjusted reproduction of the old system. Rotraud Wielandt's "certifier-on-call" (*Bestätiger vom Dienst*), a character whose appearance in Middle Eastern texts of the period is a telling marker of emerging subjectivity's lack of self-confidence, features prominently in Aḥmed Midḥat's text (and, in a way, also in al-Khūrī's), a fact that allows us to regard the two novels as documents of an attitude towards the world that is still not under the influence of global "Creativism" but rather resembles that of the *Biedermeier* or the Victorian age in Europe. This becomes evident as soon as we take a look at the componential structure of the texts.⁵ In al-Khūrī's *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji*, for instance, this structure can be summarised as follows:

- Actuality: The *wujūd ahlī*, lit. "local way of being there", i.e., the authentic, indigenous way of life, including old-fashioned mores, dress codes, behaviour, etc., and, in this text particularly, the well-established practice of marrying daughters to a male member of the extended family
- Potentiality: The protagonist Mikhālī's arrogant wish to elevate himself above his fellow countrymen by imitating European lifestyle, in particular his attempt to leave behind the despised cultural identity by marrying his daughter Émilie to a Frenchman and so overcome the *wujūd ahlī* for something allegedly better and more civilised
- Resultant: The painful recognition of the insurmountability of the naturally given identity and a regretful insight into the positive aspects of the *wujūd ahlī*

With these features, the PAR (Potentiality-Actuality-Resultant) structure of *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji* clearly represents a specification of the PAR structure of the 'global' period of "Reproductionism" as described by Falk:

⁴ For details on "Reproductionism", see above, introduction to Chapter 1 (internal periodisation of the *Nahḍa*) as well as Chapter 2 and, below, Chapter 18.

⁵ Cf. *ibid.* for the method of "Component Analysis".

Actuality: The general and the lawful, dominating in space
 Potentiality: The specific and the unique, tending towards renewal
 Resultant: The individualised reproduction of the general

We will recognize the very same structure in many other texts discussed in the chapters to follow, especially Chapters 5 (on Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī's "Eight Key Concepts"), Chapter 8 (on Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq's "Leg over leg"), Chapter 10 (on Salīm al-Bustānī's "A Modern Girl"), and in a late Ottoman-Turkish version, in Chapter 18 (on Ḥālīd Ziyā Uşaklıgil's "Forbidden Love").

* * *

4.1 Introduction

*Doch in der Mitten,
 Liegt holdes Bescheiden.*
 (But midway between / Lies blessed moderation.)
 Eduard Mörike (1804–75), *Gebet* (Prayer)⁶

During the nineteenth century the Middle East witnessed a steadily increasing European dominance not only in the military, economic and political fields. The later in this period we examine the region's societies the deeper we find them affected also by social, religious, moral and ethical change, brought about by, among other factors, the many reforms with which the governments aimed to meet the new challenges.

As a consequence of European hegemony, but also of increased travel activity between Europe and the East⁷ and a number of 'Oriental' study missions that had come in close contact with Western civilisation since the first half of the century, and not the least due to the presence of many Europeans in the Middle East, Easterners not only became acquainted more and more with European literature, music and art; in fact, Western ways of life and Western fashion spread to the degree that Eastern societies felt themselves exposed to something like a 'global' standard they had to adapt to, or at least keep up with.

With the printing press becoming *the* major means of communication since the 1860s, the journalistic and literary genres favoured in the newspapers and

⁶ The ideal of moderation and balancing between the extremes in Biedermeier, exemplarily expressed in Eduard Mörike's (1804–1875) poem *Gebet* ("Prayer"), congenially set to music by Hugo Wolf (1860–1903). Quotation from: Hugo Wolf, *Complete Songs*, accompanying booklet.

⁷ For the case of Ottoman diplomats at embassies in Europe, cf. Bouquet 2020.

periodicals of the time served as key instruments to discuss political events, to monitor the many new phenomena that were appearing everywhere in everyday life, to address the challenges of ‘progress’ and the ‘civilisation process’, and ponder the pros and cons, the purposefulness and necessity or, as the case may be, meaninglessness, if not harmfulness of all kinds of innovations and reforms.

One of the most prominent processes critical observers of their times began to register from, roughly, the 1850s onwards, was the ubiquitous and obviously steadily accelerating and intensifying spread of European fashion, ways of life, behaviour and etiquette that came in addition to the official reforms and their introduction of Western-type institutions in all areas, from the military and state administration to the educational system, legislation and jurisdiction. Given the fact that all this created sharp contrasts compared to how things had been before, to one’s own tradition and previous identity, the fascination with everything Western became also an important topic of contemporary literature. More precisely, the evidently widespread phenomenon of uncritical and ignorant imitation of European manners and ways to dress etc. not only produced specific (and rather deprecatory) terms in the languages of the Middle East – *tafarnuj* in Arabic, *alafrangalık* in Turkish⁸ – but it also triggered a sub-genre in its own right in literary writing: Euromania satire. In the following, I will analyse two key texts of this type, one from the Levant and one from Ottoman Turkey, in order to discuss the main features of this sub-genre and what it may tell us about the way intellectuals tried to negotiate reasonable compromises between the need to modernise on the one hand, and to retain a sound pride in the achievements and advantages of one’s own ‘indigenous’ culture, on the other.⁹ I will show that the discourse on the ‘Europeanisers’ bears in itself the germs of a ‘nationalisation’ of European/Western vs. Eastern culture¹⁰ and that the ability to make the right choice between both became itself a marker of *adab*.

⁸ Ar. *tafarnuj* is a verbal noun, denominative from *ifranj* ‘Frank’ (i.e., European), and means the (mostly ridiculous) adoption and blind imitation of European manners; Tu. *alafrangalık* is an abstract formation in *-lık*, from Italian *alla franca* “in the Frankish style”. Almost a century later, in 1962, Iranian writer Jalāl Āl-e Aḥmad coined the less neutral term *gharb-zadegi* “Westosis, Westoxification, Weststruckness” that already reflects a later stage of viewing the phenomenon. For a general definition, cf. Lewis, “Tafarnudj” [2012c].

⁹ The analysis here is based on the more detailed study of these texts in my postdoctoral dissertation: Guth 2003b, 10–47, and later *passim*, esp. § 82e.

¹⁰ Cf. ‘Abd al-Tawwāb’s characterisation of one of the novels to be analyzed here as an expression of an “early consciousness of Arab identity” (*wa’y mubakkir bi-l-huwiyya al-‘arabiyya*). ‘Abd al-Tawwāb, introduction to al-Khūrī, *Way*, 10.

Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji! (“Woe, so I’m not a European then!”) by the Lebanese writer Khalil al-Khūrī (1836–1907)¹¹ was first published in 1859. According to Rotraud Wielandt, the text is the earliest Western-type Arabic narrative text we know of,¹² and it is of course highly noteworthy that this pioneering exploration by an Arab author into a new genre has precisely the *tafarnuj* as its topic¹³ and takes place in a leading journal of the time, the impact of which obviously was so important that the moment it was founded made a contemporary feel that he was standing at the threshold of a new era.¹⁴ – The Ottoman novel with which al-Khūrī’s text will be compared, *Felāṭūn Beğ ile Rāḫım Efendī* (“Platon Bey and Rāḫım Efendī”), is from 1875, authored by the best-known, and probably also the most prolific, pioneer of modern Turkish fiction, Aḥmed Midḥat (1844–1913).¹⁵ It is certainly not the first Turkish novel¹⁶ but, like al-Khūrī’s text, the first to make the Euromaniac one of its protagonists.¹⁷ Before we proceed to the analysis proper, short synopses of the two novels’ contents will be helpful.

4.2 Synopses

Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji: Émilie, the daughter of a well-off merchant from Aleppo named Mikhālī, is in love with her mother’s cousin, As’ad. Her mother supports Émilie’s and As’ad’s plans to marry, since As’ad seems to be a good and

¹¹ For biographical information, cf. the introductory sections of the two recent editions of *Way* by ‘Abd al-Tawwāb (2007, 5–10) and Dāghir (2009, esp. 15–31).

¹² Wielandt 1980, 130. – Both ‘Abd al-Tawwāb (2007) and Dāghir (2009) label it “the first Arabic novel (*riwāya*)” in the subtitles of their editions. The novel is not discussed in El-Enany 2006.

¹³ According to Lewis [2012c], al-Khūrī’s novel is the earliest text in Arabic featuring the term *tafarnuj* (but it may be older).

¹⁴ Buṭrus al-Bustānī, in his famous lecture on *Ādāb al-‘arab*, held on Feb. 15, 1859, praising the opening of the Syrian Press (al-Maṭba‘a al-Sūriyya) in Beirut, with al-Khūrī as its director, as a landmark “that will be remembered by the sons of our country (*abnā’ al-waṭan*)” as the “capture of the stronghold whose benefits our ancestors were ignorant of” (*al-ḥiṣn al-ḥaṣin alladhī ghafala al-mutaqaaddimūn ‘an fawā’idih*). The metaphor used by al-Bustānī is actually that of the Atlantic Ocean: “[it is] as if I was standing at the shores of the big sea (*al-baḥr al-kabīr*) that separates the Old World from the New World”. Quoted in ‘Abd al-Tawwāb’s introduction to his edition of al-Khūrī’s novel: al-Khūrī, *Way*, 7.

¹⁵ On him, see (among many others) Lewis, “Aḥmad Midḥat” [2012a], or the entry on the author in *TBEA*, 1: 27–32.

¹⁶ On the debate about which work could/should be counted as such, cf. Strauss 2003, 39, with n. 5–7.

¹⁷ Moran 1983/1990, 1:32.

reliable match: he is a decent young man, virtuous in every respect, from a honorable family. Mikhālī, however, is against this marriage. For he thinks of himself as a European, superior to his Arab-Oriental fellow countrymen. In his class conceit-like arrogance he believes that a ‘barbarian’ like As‘ad is not good enough for Émilie, whom he himself has raised as a young ‘European’ lady. Against As‘ad, who in Mikhālī’s eyes would be a son-in-law below his own rank, the father favours another candidate, a Frenchman called Edmond who has arrived in Aleppo only recently and – allegedly – is of aristocratic descent. Mikhālī is quick in disregarding his wife’s well-founded doubts and suspicions about Edmond’s identity, forbidding her once and for all to interfere in his efforts to marry Émilie to the “count” (*Comte*) Edmond. For some time it looks as if Mikhālī’s plans could be crowned with success: Although the “count” soon realises that Mikhālī and Émilie are far from being like Europeans he continues to play the game, for he enjoys the company of beautiful Émilie. Émilie, in turn, after some initial scruples, is soon ready to abandon her earlier fiancé, faithful As‘ad, and instead grant her favour to *Comte* Edmond – only to find, however, that the latter one day has left the country, head over heels. It turns out that Edmond in reality is nothing but a waiter who had fled from France in order to avoid prosecution for a crime he had committed. On top of that, on leaving he rebuffs Mikhālī, speaking out the truth he had concealed from him so far, namely, that a genuine European like him would never marry an Arab girl like Émilie. Thus, Mikhālī begins to understand, painfully, that Edmond had not accepted him as the European he himself had believed he was: “Alas then, I’m not a European!” Émilie, whose coquettish hopes all have collapsed with Edmond’s sudden departure, for some time tries to win back As‘ad whose faithfulness she had betrayed. But As‘ad is clever enough to see through the game and turns away from her, deeply hurt in his feelings. On this, Émilie, full of remorse and as a broken woman, decides to become a nun.

Felātūn Beğ ile Rāḳım Efendī: The novel has two main story-lines running parallel to each other, connected in time and space only through the fact that the protagonists of each, Rāḳım Efendī and the ‘Euromaniac’ Felātūn Beğ, respectively, know and meet each other on certain occasions, mostly by chance somewhere in town, or in the house of the rich Englishman Mr Ziklas who, together with his wife and two daughters, has settled in Istanbul’s Asmalımescit quarter in order to spend his retirement there. The two plots are designed as a comparison between two contrasting approaches to life: Felātūn is rich, Rāḳım lives in rather humble circumstances; lazy Felātūn squanders the money he has inherited from his father (and eventually goes bankrupt), while Rāḳım cannot do much on his meagre salary, but calculates diligently and in this way manages to

make life a bit more agreeable every now and then; Felâṭūn is quite an ignorant, Râḳım on the other hand is highly cultured and knowledgeable, etc. In addition, the author also conceptualises the contrast between the two antipodes as an opposition between Felâṭūn's ridiculous imitation of European lifestyle and Râḳım's being at peace with himself and his 'Turkish'¹⁸ (*alaturka*) way of life.

The novel has an episodic structure where each new event is a little story in its own right, more or less independent of what happened before or what comes after. However, all of them serve to illustrate, again and again, the contrasting characters of the protagonists and pros and cons of their lifestyles and philosophies.

There are too many such episodes to go into detail here. Suffice it to say that, towards the end of the novel, Felâṭūn Bey has dissipated his father's money in luxury, letting his French mistress and her accomplices fleece him at the casino. He is forced to leave Istanbul for a distant island in the Mediterranean where he has been lucky enough to get the position of a *mutaşarrıf*¹⁹ and will spend the rest of his life working hard to slowly reduce the immense loan he had to take up in order to pay his debts. On the other side we see a happy Râḳım, who has a good job and is looking forward now to marry Cānān, a ravishingly beautiful young Circassian woman whom he has bought some years ago as a slave girl to help his ageing black foster mother and who, under Râḳım's own tutelage, has grown up now and become a cultivated lady in every respect.

4.3 Themes, motifs, characters

Since the emergence of the printing press had triggered an interpretation of *adab* writing as a commenting *in public* on issues of *public* interest,²⁰ the new literary genres like theatre and the novel saw it as their fundamental task to take up such issues and expose them to public discussion. A precondition of commenting and criticising contemporary 'hot topics' was to monitor and *register* what was changing. One major feature of change as described in the texts is the *speed* with which it took place and the *extent* to which it befell the societies the authors were living in. Quite significantly, we read for instance in al-Khūrī's introduction to his novel that "whoever comes to our city [Beirut] from the East [where everything is

¹⁸ In single quotation marks because this is clearly a construct of the author's. In reality, Râḳım's 'Turkish'-ness contains many 'Western' elements, esp. his protestant-like work ethos and sense of economy (see below).

¹⁹ On this see Findley, "Mutaşarrıf" [2012].

²⁰ Cf. Dupont 2010.

still more traditional] will without doubt find that it has changed *stupendously in many respects within only a few years*".²¹ The novels under discussion therefore are eager to register the many aspects of this change in *great detail* and with an almost scientific *accuracy* that alone would be sufficient to make them a highly valuable source for any research on the cultural history of the Middle East at the time.²² From *Way* we learn, for example, that *café au lait* and tomato sauce (*sālsa*) seem to have reached the country only recently since they are still regarded as something novel (to be explained in a footnote! – al-Khūrī, 1860, 73) and typically European. In many places people are beginning to use knife and fork (*ibid.*, 38), and not a few men have started to wear trousers (*ibid.*, 7), hats (*ibid.*, 33, 37), handkerchiefs and socks (*ibid.*, 33). Even in a city as traditional as Aleppo a school for girls has opened only a few months ago, and there are soirées where women mix with the guests (*ibid.*, 42). Musicians play Mazurkas from notes on European instruments (*ibid.*, 53). Banks, until a few years ago still unknown in the country, are spreading (*ibid.*, 44), European visitors are touring the Levant (*ibid.*, 46), and French is heard everywhere (*ibid.*, 32). To own Western products and have contact with Europeans is tantamount to high social prestige, to the extent that Mikhālī pretends to have European ancestors (*ibid.*, 34) and believes that hosting a Frenchman will no doubt ensure him a higher reputation (*ibid.*, 91). Aḥmed Midḥat, too, is eager to mention mayonnaise and champaign (Mithat n.d., 99);²³ the fact that many now drink tea with rum (*ibid.*, 100) and dance waltz and polka (*ibid.*, 67–8); the fact that piano lessons now are something that goes without saying for daughters from “good families” (*ibid.*, 41), etc. Like al-Khūrī, Midḥat too registers changes in the language: what used to be a *çorba* is called *soupe* now in the higher echelons of society (*ibid.*, 17), and the Euromaniac Felātūn Beğ admires in his mistress, an “*actrice*”, her “*éloquence*” and her “*sentimentale*” nature (*ibid.*, 97). It is a time in which a rich man like Felātūn’s father does not hesitate long before giving up a beautiful *konak*²⁴ with a wonderful garden in old Üsküdar and instead settle close to Istanbul’s European quarter, Beyoğlu, “in order to lead a more comfortable life” (Mithat n.d., 12).

21 Al-Khūrī, *Way* 8, my emphasis. Page numbers refer to the “second print” (*ṭab’a thāniya*) of 1860, see bibliography. The novel has been reedited twice only recently, once as a facsimile (ed. ‘Abd al-Tawwāb, 2007), and once with an emended and newly set text (ed. Dāghir, 2009).

22 The high attention to details, esp. of eating, drinking and clothing, is noticed also by ‘Abd al-Tawwāb, who also thinks that the author uses them with great skill, assigning each of them a function in the novel’s structure. In his introduction to al-Khūrī, *Way*, 12.

23 Non-italic page numbers refer to the Gözlem Yayıncılık edition (republished? by Morpa Kültür Yayınları, n.d.). For numbers in italics, see below, note 28.

24 ‘Villa, little palais’. Cf. Kuban 1994.

Many already live in an “*apartment*”²⁵ (ibid., 100) and sleep in fashionable beds rather than on mattresses on the floor (ibid., 45–46). Parents follow the “*dernier cri*” of European fashion even in dressing their children (ibid., 14) although this fashion is changing almost every other day. (ibid., 18).

In order to comment on all these phenomena and on the way society deals with them and the consequences of the rapid and ubiquitous change, both authors create a literary figure that is highly typical of the literature of the period, the “Euromaniac” (Ar. *mutafarnij*, “acting like a Franc”, Tu. *alafranga züppe* “Francophile fop”). Given its prominence in literature we are probably not over-interpreting the textual evidence if we assume that these fictional characters were not simply products of their authors’ phantasies but reflected, to a certain degree at least, a type of people one had a good chance to meet in the streets of major Middle Eastern cities in the second half of the nineteenth century. The degree to which both authors *exaggerate* this aspect of contemporary social reality in *cartoon-like* representations can be taken as an indication of how *strange* and *ridiculous* an unquestioning orientation towards the West must have seemed to these intellectuals:

A Frenchman or Englishman [...] arriving in Beirut may think he is entering a big house of comedies, [...] for our guest will see there many gibbering (*yatabarbarūn*) in his language [...] and using European commodities in a ridiculous way]. On the beach, [for example,] he will meet *khawāja* Shāhin al-Fārūdī,²⁶ dressed in something that can hardly be called a garment (*libās*) unless the words should miss their meanings, wrapped into a white gown (*ridāʾ*) with coat-tails that elsewhere is called a *redingote*, clasping in his hand a (walking-)stick as though it were a ship’s rudder, [...] in his mouth the chimney of a steamboat, i.e., the thing that is called ‘cigar’ and makes your fingers look as if they could get rid of that colour only by taking off the skin. As soon as this person happens to meet a fellow countryman in the same appearance, their two heads almost run into each other, their waists bend backwards, and their tongues, not even used to express themselves correctly in the language of their [own] country, start offending all grammatical rules that have been put up carefully in Paris or in London. [For a foreigner visiting Beirut] it will look as if our two friends were staging a theatrical scene that was caricaturing the manners and language of the Europeans.

(al-Khūrī 1860, 4–6)

²⁵ Cf. Sey 1993.

²⁶ Wehr, *Dictionary*, s.v. *ḵawāja*: “sir, Mr. (title and for of address, esp., for Christians and Westerners, used with or without the name of the person so addressed)”; Badawi/Hinds, *Dictionary*: “1 European or Western foreigner. 2 [obsol] Christian”. “Shāhin al-Fārūdī” is probably only a phantasy name (with *Fārūdī* resounding French *parodie*?).

However, the *mutafarnij* / *alafranga züppe* serves al-Khūrī and Midḥat not merely to register the process of increasing ‘Europeanisation’ but to *express their critique* of an all too uncritical adoption of Western manners. Interestingly enough, Midḥat, although probably not aware of al-Khūrī’s novel, addresses almost the same points as his Arab colleague, as we shall see now.

Both criticise the Euromaniacs’ *incomplete* and only *superficial* Europeanisation: they have remained stuck halfway in their efforts. It starts with outward appearances. Although the *mutafarnij* / *alafranga züppe* spends many hours a day dressing up in front of the mirror (al-Khūrī 1860, 39; Mithat n.d., 18), the result is ridiculous. For example, when Mikhālī in *Way* welcomes the “comte”, the *mutafarnij* has squeezed his legs into

green trousers, above which a belt of Tripolitanian silk, half a foot in breadth, topped by a made-to-measure jerkin of Aleppine brocade; [the whole] enwrapped in the European robe (*jilbāb*) he had made from blue cloth and lined with yellow silk, around the neck a tie made of red wool; above all these exquisite accessoires, the head was crowned by a straw hat, and on his hands he was wearing thick woolen gloves.

(al-Khūrī 1860, 47)²⁷

In a similar way, Aḥmed Midḥat focuses on Felātūn Beğ’s trousers, stressing that they are much too tight and even letting them burst once their owner starts dancing polka. As if this wasn’t enough, the author adds, in the exaggerating manner so typical of satire:

and because the jacket [Felātūn was wearing above the trousers] was too short to cover [what was under it] the opening became visible. Praise the Lord, Felātūn had put on underpants that evening! For he used, when he went out in great style, to put on the trousers without underpants in order not to impair their proper fit; in fact, he believed that only this was truly *à l’eupéenne*. So, had he succumbed on that evening to what otherwise was his custom then an even greater opening would have become apparent.

(Midḥat n.d., 68 / 1994, 44–5)²⁸

Dress is however only one of many other symptoms that point to the fact that the fops’ ‘Europeanness’ is nothing but a blind, ignorant imitation of mere appearances. They have books, yes, but only on the shelves (al-Khūrī 1860, 6–7). They go to the theatre, but only to flirt with women (Mithat n.d., 76).²⁹ They like to be

²⁷ Cf. also the scene, quoted above, describing two fops meeting on the beach in Beirut.

²⁸ Page numbers in italics refer to the edition of the text by Mehmet Emin Agar (1994), which is closer to the original Ottoman wording than the ‘simplified, smoothened’ (*sadeleştirilmiş*) modern Turkish version.

²⁹ Midḥat, *Felātun Bey*, 76.

called civilised but treat women in a traditional way, not as humans but as if they were mere parts of the house's furniture (al-Khūrī 1860, 7). They have knives and forks but do not know how to use them properly, etc. In sum, their pretended civilisation is nothing but an “imagined” one (*tamaddun wahmī*, *ibid.*, 15).

For both authors, such behaviour can only be explained as resulting from a *lack of education and knowledge*.³⁰ So we read, for example, that Felātūn's ignorance and bad French do not come as a surprise: already his father had no great esteem for learning and therefore thought a *rüşdiye*³¹ and French lessons twice a week would be enough for his son (Mithat n.d., 37–8). As a result, Felātūn Beğ learnt Arabic only superficially; he has not even heard of the additional letters *p*, *č*, *ž*, *g* used to write Persian and Ottoman (*ibid.*); his knowledge of French is markedly bad; and even his Ottoman is deplorably deficient (*ibid.*, 67).

No wonder then that such ignoramuses often *behave downright stupidly and make fools of themselves* in the presence of those who know better. Mikhālī's lack of knowledge about European cuisine and table manners, for instance, becomes all the more evident – and embarrassing for his wife and daughter! – when he attempts to behave like a European in front of Edmond for whom, as a Frenchman, it is easy to notice all that is not as it should be (al-Khūrī 1860, 67–81). Mikhālī becomes particularly ridiculous when Edmond asks him about Émilie's allegedly ‘European’ education. When the false *comte* wants to know whether Mikhālī's daughter had been taught how to dance the mazurka, the would-be European reacts indignantly: “we are people of esteem, not dancers!” Neither is Émilie allowed to practise singing, because it is indecent for a girl to raise her voice. As for knitting and sewing, these are too ‘low’ occupations for a daughter of a man of his standing. Mikhālī does not even know what geography is and rejects astronomy as magic; and in none of the other highly valuable sciences like physics, history, or mathematics, or in the study of the New Testament or the art of writing, has Émilie ever received any instruction that could compare to that of a European girl (*ibid.*, 53–7).³² Midḥat's novel likewise abounds with similar

30 For the high importance attached to (the institutionalisation of) education and learning during the Arab *nahḍa* and the role it played in the transition process from *adab* to *literature*, see Allan 2012.

31 On this type of school that follows a primary (*ibtidā'ī*) level, see, e.g., Günyol 1998 or Sakaoğlu 1994.

32 The catalogue of skills and virtues listed here (foreign languages; geography, history, mathematics, astronomy, physics, and other sciences; the art of composing essays, keeping a diary, caring about beautiful handwriting; social dance and music, esp. singing and playing the piano; sewing, embroidery, knitting; and as frame: the study of the New Testament) echoes very much the bourgeois ideals for the formation of girls in the Biedermeier period, see below (p. 113).

situations in which the ignorant fop makes a fool of himself and is doubly disgraceful because of the presence of those who know best what European civilisation really is – Europeans themselves.

It is however not only the superficiality of knowledge or the complete ignorance that the authors criticise in the Euromaniacs. Al-Khūrī looks at Europeanising also as something *morally reprehensible*: it is *treason*, being *untruthful to one's self*, one's Arab *identity*, as well as to the community of one's fellow countrymen, paired with unjustifiable *submissiveness*, or even *servility*, testifying to a *lack of self-respect*, sense of honour, dignity, and upright manliness. Thus, Mikhālī does not like to be taken for an Arab ("God forbid!", *ibid.*, 49) and is not only ashamed of his fellow countrymen's 'uncivilised' way of dressing and behaving (*ibid.*, 50), but even of his own wife (*ibid.*, 52). He boasts of having taught Émilie to despise everything Arabic (*ibid.*), and does not complain when Edmond (who considers "these Arabs" to be "wretched scum") treats him without any respect (*ibid.*, 91), makes him wait a full hour in the courtyard, etc. Mikhālī allows Edmond to boss him around in a humiliating manner and displays an absolutely *disgraceful* attitude of *servility* towards him that is *disgusting* and proves the *lack of dignity* in the would-be European (*ibid.*, 92). As for al-Khūrī, he criticises his Mikhālī not only for almost never reading the daily newspaper, but when he does so the author lets him, out of stinginess, only borrow the paper instead of buying it. Such a behaviour, the reader is told, disregards the citizen's responsibility towards his community and the future of the nation: not to buy a paper means denying one's support to the print media that are an important factor in the nation's (*umma*) efforts to "rise again" (*nahḍa*, *ibid.*, 58). This is in striking contrast to the *mutafarnij* spending excessively on any Edmond-come-lately (*ibid.*, 64).

Unlike al-Khūrī, Miḍḥat does not seem – at first sight, at least – to show Felātūn Beğ as a traitor of his Turkish identity (although the author permanently contrasts the behaviour of the *alafranga züppe* with that of Rākım, the representative of *alaturkalık*). On a closer look, however, we may recognize a motif that is quite similar to that of al-Khūrī's accusing the *mutafarnij* of identity treason, namely the fact that Felātūn squanders what he inherited from his father. This is a motif that in the literature of the time often has the metaphorical meaning of frivolously gambling away the riches of the Ottoman-Turkish tradition and committing treason against the heritage from the forefathers. Moreover, the Ottoman author ascribes almost identical negative traits to Felātūn Beğ's *alafrangalık* as those al-Khūrī notes in Mikhālī. Miḍḥat, too, parallels 'European-ising' with *moral odiousness*: On several occasions, Felātūn Beğ proves to be quite a scaredy-cat (Miḥat n.d., 51), a trait that later is supplemented

by a *lack of manliness and self-respect* when he allows his mistress to address him using all kinds of embarrassing pet names (ibid., 99–100); Râkım's reaction to this: he thinks that Felâṭūn should simply chase her away. But Felâṭūn only laments “like a dog” (ibid., 133) whenever the woman gets sulky-huffy. Râkım leaves no doubt that he would prefer an old-fashioned Ottoman lady over such a French woman who does not stop treating her lover in such a *degrading* (*onur kırıcı / hakâretâmiz*, Mithat n.d., 101 / 1994, 70) manner.

Although the ‘Euro-fop’ in reality has not much to be proud of, he behaves in a very *arrogant* way towards his fellow countrymen, an arrogance al-Khūrī evidently sees spreading everywhere in his environment, which is why he lets his narrator complain, already in the novel's foreword, about *kibriyā'* or *da'wā* as ubiquitous phenomena of his time (al-Khūrī 1860, 5). An example of this in *Way* is the fact that Mikhālī does not read the newspaper because he thinks he is civilised and knows enough (ibid., 58). He also behaves in an extremely arrogant way when he outrightly rejects any Arab as a potential husband for his daughter; when he makes derogatory remarks about his wife, etc. (cf. above). The same kind of arrogance also Midḥat is eager to demonstrate, deplore and condemn. He too takes his characters' attitudes towards European or non-European marriage candidates as a touchstone in this regard. Felâṭūn Beğ's sister Mihribân, for example, snobbish like her brother, is very quick in rejecting any knocker-at-the-door who is not of a more prestigious standing than a *kâtîp*, *asker*, *hoca* (scribe, soldier, teacher) – the narrator clearly disapproves of such a mindset (Mithat n.d., 19). A similar task of giving the narrator room to criticise the *alafranga züppe*'s arrogance is fulfilled by the long description of Felâṭūn Beğ's trips to the ‘Sweet Waters of Europe’ at Kâğthane: The author leaves no doubt that the fop prefers to undertake these trips on weekends only because he is eager to effectively display his affluence and have the opportunity to make a show of all the luxury he commands (an arrogance that is almost insulting to those who witness it; ibid., 128). In contrast, Râkım Efendi usually arranges his excursions on weekdays because it is more relaxing; he also prefers home-made sandwiches over what is sold out there (ibid., 106). And while Râkım rejoices already in a glass of fresh goat milk he gets from a shepherd, Felâṭūn Beğ pretends, in hotel “C”, to be a prince of noble descent (*soyluluk iddiası*, Mithat n.d., 174 / *asilzâdelik da'vâ ederdi*, Mithat 1994, 127).

4.4 Euromania as a threat

Both the Ottoman and the Arab author regard the uncritical Europhilia found among a group of their fellow countrymen clearly as a danger. For al-Khūrī, it

threatens first and foremost the coherence of the society he lives in. This becomes evident from the function Mikhālī's *tafarnuj* has for the narrative as a whole: it generates a *conflict*; it is to be blamed for the non-conclusion of a marriage that, without his *tafarnuj*, probably would have made for a happy and harmonious couple; and Émilie would not have ended up in a monastery, As'ad not in a faraway country. It may seem simply ridiculous, at first sight, when "some people [...] suddenly turn away from embroidered turbans to hats interwoven with gold and in less than a second make a clownish jump (*wathba bahlawāniyya*) from the East to the West" (al-Khūrī 1860, 33); but a closer look reveals that such a trend does *serious harm to social harmony*. To assume that al-Khūrī conceptualises Émilie, who ends up in a self-chosen seclusion/isolation, already as a symbol of the nation would certainly be an over-interpretation since she is not yet particularly marked as such a symbol (has no specifically 'national' attributes). It can be no pure accident, however, and is also highly noteworthy from a gender perspective, that al-Khūrī makes *her*, a young unmarried woman, the object that is to be 'gotten' by, or given to, either Edmond or As'ad, and it is her whom the author makes the one who has to *decide* between the two alternative candidates and whose consciousness, thus, becomes the site of the major clash and conflict. Looking at the novel as a whole, however, this clash and conflict occupy only relatively little space so that Émilie certainly still is not the main protagonist – this remains clearly Mikhālī's role so that the potentially negative consequences of *tafarnuj*, when compared to its ridiculousness, emerge only as a rather marginal issue.³³ Compared to the negative effects Europhilia has on society / the community, the damage one could imagine it to do to *politics* seems almost negligible in al-Khūrī's presentation: Mikhālī neither reads nor buys newspapers, i.e., he is not interested in politics, nor does he talk about it. This distribution of emphasis is probably to be explained from the fact that the 'Arabs' or 'Easterners/Orientalists' al-Khūrī constantly is referring to are not yet a clearly defined *political* factor at the time, and the *umma* he sees himself as a part of is still more of a socio-cultural than a political entity. This would also be a plausible explanation for the 'Biedermeier/Victorian' character of the bourgeois morals and ethics that speaks from the novel (see below).

In contrast, Miḍḥat evidently does not only define himself in socio-cultural terms but also identifies with a political idea – the Ottoman Empire. In *his* narrative, Felāṭūn Beğ does not do much to affect social harmony: the protagonist's *alafrangalık* only harms himself. An uncritical imitation of

33 I disagree here with 'Abd al-Tawwāb's reading (in al-Khūrī, *Way*, 14 ff.) that assigns the role of the "central character" (*al-shakhṣiyya al-miḥwariyya*) to Émilie.

European fashion, habits etc. is therefore, first and foremost, merely ridiculous. Nevertheless, the author does stress another aspect (which is missing from al-Khūrī's text): Felātūn Beğ is not primarily shown as a Europhile fop but as a *lazy squanderer of his father's wealth* (cf. the fact, mentioned above, p. 96, that this is considered a sign of treason). For instance, an average week in his life passes in the following manner:

Being the only son of a father with a monthly income of not less than twenty thousand *kurüş*, he [Felātūn], who believed his own philosophising to be more precise than that of the followers of Platon, had reached the conclusion that a person with a monthly income of more than twenty thousand *kurüş* does not need anything else than this in his life. Since, on top of that, he thinks of himself as a mature and virtuous person, an excursion has to be made every Friday [= Muslim weekend holiday]. On Saturday, he relaxes from the stress and strains of the previous day. On Sunday [= European weekend holiday], it goes without saying that another excursion definitely *has* to be made since there will be even more European-type activities at the respective places. Monday then is the day of relaxing from the hardships of Sunday. On Tuesday, it could be an idea to show up in office, but usually it seems more appropriate to comply with the desire to visit some places in Beyoğlu, [...] see some friends etc., and therefore take off also this day. If he then [indeed] goes to office on Wednesday he passes the time between six and nine o'clock³⁴ telling stories about the first part of the week, and in the evening he always leaves [in such cases] together with two colleagues. Given that these two are as young as Felātūn Beğefendi himself and given that he lives in Beyoğlu [and knows it very well], he has, as a matter of course, to entertain his friends with some amusements *à l'euro péenne*, and the night will be spent in places of *alafranga* entertainment. The nightly excursion of course extends into the next morning, and this is why one has to sleep the whole of Thursday, right until evening. And then, yes, we have reached Friday again [...].

(Mithat n.d., 15)

The squanderer of inherited fortunes (*mirasyedi*) is a type of character who figures already in earlier novels. But while in these texts he used to dissipate his fortune in bars and brothels, he now spends it on *alafranga* attire and entertainment. The fact that Midḥat, as Moran demonstrated, is concerned, in the first place, with the economic aspects of Euromania³⁵ can probably be interpreted as an expression of Midḥat's view of the preservation of the Empire's economic

³⁴ Old way of counting! Corresponding, roughly, to the time between 11–12 a.m. and 2–3 p.m., since we have to start counting from sunrise (1 “hour” equalling one twelfth of the time between sunrise and sunset). Cf. Ruska and Gökmen 1988, as well as Hermelink 1974.

³⁵ Moran 1990, 1:38 ff. Money matters to such a degree that Midḥat not only mentions exact amounts (vgl. Moran, *ibid.*, 41–2) but often also gives their equivalent in French Francs; in this way we are informed, for instance, that 1,500 Ottoman Lira at the time equalled c. 34,500 French Francs (Midḥat, *Felātun Bey*, 77).

power as a precondition to the preservation of its political importance. Thus, it is less his compatriots' enthusiasm for everything 'European' that Midḥat, unlike al-Khūrī, sees as the major problem but, ultimately, Europe itself and those who, like Felāṭūn Beğ, weaken the Empire from within through their laziness, extravagance and life full of amusements – thereby cementing, albeit indirectly, Europe's strength, and preventing the Empire from defying its rivals. The inherited fortune that Felāṭūn Beğ frivolously spends on appearances thus also has a metaphoric dimension: it is the economic and political power of the Ottoman Empire, produced and accumulated by, and inherited from, earlier generations (the 'fathers').

4.5 Wujūd ahlī / alaturkalık

Despite the difference in emphasis discussed in the preceding paragraph, both authors develop in their texts a counter-concept with which a life *à l'européenne* is contrasted. Al-Khūrī refers to this idea as *wujūd ahlī* (roughly: "the indigenous way of life");³⁶ Midḥat calls it *alaturka* ("the Turkish way") as opposed to *alafranga*. Al-Khūrī has the *tafarnuj* embodied by one protagonist and assigns the role of the representatives of the *wujūd ahlī* to Mikhālī's wife, Émilie's (ex-)fiancé As'ad and, as its most powerful mouthpiece, to his narrator, particularly so in the non-narrative, explanatory and essay-like foreword and epilogue. Midḥat, on the other hand, stages the differences between the two principles as a regular juxtaposition of two opposing protagonists. Irrespective of this structural difference, however, there is a striking degree of congruence in what the Arab and the Ottoman authors mean when they speak about *wujūd ahlī* / *alaturkalık*. Some details:

Although the *wujūd ahlī* is on its retreat everywhere and almost nobody knows anymore "what is being lost and what is gained" (al-Khūrī 1860, 3) in the process of modernisation, the original way of living is still to be found in places like Damascus, places that "are not touched by Europeanisation yet" (*yad al-tafarnuj lam tadnu minhā ba'd*, *ibid.*, 45). Even though there is nothing spectacular in such places, it is worth noting that, thanks to the absence or belated arrival of Europeanisation there, they have remained centres of "the noble Eastern manners, customs, ways of dressing and behaving" (*al-ādāb wa-l-'awā'id wa-l-aksām wa-l-hay'āt al-sharqiyya al-sharīfa*, *ibid.*, 45–46). In Lebanon,

³⁶ First mentioned al-Khūrī, *Way*, 3. – Wielandt translates *wujūd ahlī* as "die einheimische Art der Existenz" (1980, 134).

the *wujūd ahli* is obviously to be found only in the *countryside* (though even the villages have already become places of mixing and contradiction, *tajamma‘at bi-hā l-aḍḍād*, *ibid.*, 9). It is true, al-Khūrī concedes, that life there is dominated by a deplorable inertia and laziness (*kasal*); on the other hand, you still find in these places a kind of *manliness*, *nobility of mind*, *generosity* and *liberality* (*muruwwa, karam, jūd, samāḥ*) that is unknown in Europe. Unlike the Euro-fops who tend to be ignorant fools, village people often still display an enormous *interest in education and learning*, and it is common to meet *highly cultured* people there (*ibid.*, 10). According to al-Khūrī, another expression of *wujūd ahli* in the countryside is that people attach the label ‘true magnanimity and nobility of character’ to *modesty* (*tawāḍu‘*) rather than to boasting, and that they find true beauty in *simplicity* (*basāṭa*) rather than in extravagance; people are still *proud* to be who they are (*‘izzat al-naḥs*, *ibid.*, 11), and this is also why they still attribute the highest value to *natural* rather than artificial beauty with its “delusive ornament” (*zīna kādhibā*) in women (*ibid.*, 10–11).

Midḥat, for his part, does not localise the authentic way of life in the countryside but shows it first and foremost in Rākım Efendi, a representative of the urban middleclass. But he praises as virtuous the same type of behaviour and thinking as al-Khūrī does, and he lets these appear as expression of the good old *alaturka* tradition. Rākım, too, delights in everything *natural* (*ibid.*, 123). The place where he lives is furnished modestly, yet – or perhaps precisely for this reason – it is homelike and cozy (Mithat n.d., 44). His *modesty* matches a true believer’s *gratitude towards God* who has to be thanked for all the beautiful things one is granted in life (*ibid.*, 122, 178). And it is none less than Mr Ziklas the Englishman³⁷ who appreciates Rākım for his “good character/decency (*hüsn-i aḥlāk*), contentedness (*toḡ gözlülük*), chastity/honesty/uprightness and faithfulness/fidelity (*‘iffet ve şadāḳat*), bravery (*mertlik*), noble manliness (*mürüvvet*) and generosity (*büyüklik*)” (*ibid.*, 118), virtues that the Europeanised people consider as ‘something stupid’ but that were held in high esteem by ‘the old’ (*ibid.*, 17). Rākım demonstrates these virtues again and again, particularly in his treatment of subordinates. Whereas already Felāṭūn’s father would not accept any “*arap çorap*”³⁸ into his service because he felt this could compromise him in front of European guests (*ibid.*, 11), we find a sense of *general humanity*, across the classes, in Rākım’s *alaturka* world: already in his childhood he learns not to treat his black foster mother – a slave – differently from his real mother, and this is

³⁷ For European characters as ‘certifiers-on-call’ cf. soon below.

³⁸ Paronomastic expression with deprecatory meaning; a literal translation does not make sense (*arap* = “Arab, negro”, *çorap* = “sock”).

why the former without any problem can take the latter's place as soon as the mother passes away. Later, Râkım does not behave with the class-conceit of a master and owner towards his slave Cānān, but rather coddles her as much as he can, lets her decide herself whether she wants to be sold or stay in his household (ibid., 88), in short, he is so nice to her that Mr Ziklas' daughters, i.e., young British ladies, would very much love to give up their life as free-born women in exchange for a life as Râkım's slave (ibid., 146)!³⁹ On the one hand, Midḥat contrasts Felâṭūn Beğ's laziness and *mirasyedilik* by Râkım's *working enthusiasm* (see below), his *prudent economy* and his *rational calculations* (ibid., 73).⁴⁰ On the other, Râkım also proves to be really generous and openhanded, in spite of his limited resources, thanks to his *altruism* (not, as Felâṭūn, out of craving for recognition): whenever it comes to helping others Râkım always distributes liberally, and Cānān the slave girl lives a better life in his house than "the daughters of the high society (*kibār*)" in the latter's homes (ibid.). Râkım is also always *upright* and *honest*, even in personally difficult situations: as soon as he is aware that he has fallen in love with Cānān and is also attracted to her body, he terminates the relationship with his mistress, Mme Jozefino; but since this relationship always has been more than mere sex a *cordial friendship* remains (ibid., 93–95). Although Râkım is not perfect and shows moments of moral weakness (e.g., when he is a bit tipsy and allows Mme Jozefino to seduce him) he never takes advantage of the woman's 'blunder' but keeps her secret and is eager to protect the friend's reputation (ibid., 64). His inclination towards Jozefino does not make him less *bashful* (ibid., 48) and *chaste* than he usually is: Mr and Mrs Ziklas are at no time concerned about leaving their daughters alone at home taking lessons with their private teacher Râkım (ibid., 81). In Midḥat's sexual ethics it is also important that the youth's choice of their partners does not contradict the ideas of the older generation and that it thus is *in harmony with social hierarchy* (which is seen as part of the *alaturka* tradition/way of living). Again and again he stresses that representatives of the older generation, as moral authorities, *acknowledge* what he does: his love of Cānān is approved of by his beloved foster mother Fedāyī (ibid., 113); and Jozefino – who for Râkım and Cānān later is a "mother or elder sister", respectively (ibid., 179) – says "Bravo!" when Cānān confesses to her that her beloved master has made her a concubine (*odalık*, ibid., 180).

In al-Khūrī's text, virtues of a similar kind are embodied by Émilie's fiancé, As'ad (though not to the same extent as in Midḥat's Râkım). On the one side, we

39 For the discussion about slavery in the late Ottoman Empire in general, cf. Sagaster 1997.

40 Cf. also Râkım's name, which is from Arabic *rāqim*, i.e., "the calculating one".

have here Mikhālī's plans, motivated by nothing but a craving for prestige, to marry his daughter to a false French *comte*, paired with Émilie's coquetry – despite initial scruples, she is ready to betray her fiancé for the prospect of marrying Edmond. This kind of thinking is contrasted with As'ad's *sincerity* (*şidq*) and *patient faithfulness* (*wafā'*), his *forbearance* and his *seriousness*, virtues that As'ad himself knows he owes to his good upbringing – which has to be seen as an aspect of *wujūd ahlī* since the author constructs As'ad as a representative of authenticity and Arabness. The same is true for the young man's *sensibility* that manifests itself, among other things, in his *love of poetry*.

It goes without saying that also Rāḳım is an epitome of *sensibility*: He always cares deeply about others (e.g., when one of the Ziklas girls is ill; Mithat n.d., 172–73), even about stupid Felāṭūn Beğ when he drops a brick (ibid., 70); Rāḳım feels *pity* for this man even though Felāṭūn did not listen to his advice and therefore is himself to blame for what he has ended up in (ibid., 171–72). And just like As'ad's *sensibility*, also Rāḳım's manifests itself in *love of poetry*. – Since Rāḳım, as Felāṭūn Beğ's negative counterpart, not only represents *alaturkalık* but also has to be the opposite of the lazy *mirasyedi*, the author supplements his resting in *alaturkalık* with character traits such as *diligence*, *ambition*, and the ability to *work hard*. After having graduated from the *rüşdiye*, our *assiduous* hero is accepted – at the early age of sixteen! – into work at the Foreign Office (*Hāriciye Kalemī*), where he works “day and night” and is eager to improve his learning and to be promoted (ibid., 22). Alongside this job he seeks to increase his income through translations, writing articles in newspapers, etc. Slowly but steadily, through hard work, *ambition* and assiduous *endurance* – the narrator praises him as a virtual “machine” (ibid., 30) – he is able to accumulate a modest wealth. Asked about his profession he usually describes himself as a “worker” (“who works with his pen”, ibid., 99). The characters associated with Rāḳım are such ‘machines’ too: When Rāḳım's father, a rather poor servant at Tophane, dies, without leaving anything to the family to live on, his mother and foster-mother have to work hard in order to survive and feed the boy, “in short, they earned their living with their own hands without having to rely on others” (ibid., 22) – a very *protestant-like work ethic* that had found its way into an Ottoman intellectual's world of thinking and that Midḥat merges here with his protagonist's *alaturkahk!*

As is clear already from the conceptual terminology referring to ‘the Franks/ Europeans’ on the one side and ‘the Turks’, ‘the Arabs’, or ‘local population’ (*ahl*) on the other, we are witnessing the *beginnings of a nationalisation of ethics and*

culture in the Middle East.⁴¹ The authors themselves often provide their readers with a more general theoretical framework that serves as a justification of the distribution of certain skills and virtues among specific “nations”. For al-Khūrī, for example, each individual nation (*umma*) has a “specific predisposition”, or “susceptibility” (*qābiliyya khāṣṣa*), pre-ordained and willed by God, for a specific type of civilisation⁴²

that matches [this nation’s] character disposition [or should we say: ethics?] (*akhlāq*) and manners and customs [or should we say: culture?] (*ādāb*), [and it does so] in a way that makes it impossible to exchange it for another without putting the best of its human values [...] at risk.

(al-Khūrī 1860, 3; similarly also *ibid.*, 159)

Hence, any attempt to try to exchange one’s identity for that of another “nation” can only have harmful consequences. As a rule, al-Khūrī concludes, it is therefore to be wished that “an Englishman remains an Englishman, a Frenchman a Frenchman and an Arab an Arab” (*ibid.*, 4). So, since an Easterner, like a leopard, cannot ‘change his spots’, i.e., his God-given nature, the *tafarnuj* and its denial of one’s identity are characterised by a certain obsessiveness, which at the same time is something *insincere*, *deviant* and *dishonourable*.

This holds true also for Miḍḥat’s way of looking at things, as can be seen, e.g., in the way the author lets Felāṭūn suffer when he forces himself into tight ‘European’ trousers or when he, after his father’s death, and only in order to please the French *actrice* Polini, tries to adopt European mourning traditions although they actually run contrary to what he would have liked to do himself (Miḥat n.d., 95).

Yet, although al-Khūrī and Miḍḥat on the whole strongly recommend Eastern tradition as the option that is at least as good, if not better than fashions imported from Europe, both authors are not completely opposed to Western achievements.

⁴¹ Cf. also the re-configuration of *adab*, observed by Bouquet (2020) as a necessity for Ottoman diplomats. The “périmètre[s] de la distinction” that, according to Bouquet, served as markers of an Ottoman ‘national’ identity were “le harem, la viande, et le fez”. For the writers’ task “to make the ‘*āmma* [common people] realise that it form[ed] a community united by its culture, language, history and belonging to the same land; in a word that it is a nation”, cf. Dupont 2010, esp. 174–5. – Inside the Ottoman Empire, the nationalisation of ethics and culture can probably be observed even earlier. As Albrecht Hofheinz remarks (personal communication, Feb. 18, 2017), Arabic sources from the beginnings of the nineteenth century in the Hejaz/Red Sea region often tend to contrast “the Arabs” (as the good ones) by “the Turks”, whom they depict as a debauched race that does not obey Islam in the way it should be obeyed.

⁴² Cf. Wielandt 1980, 134.

In spite of al-Khūrī's thesis of the fundamental incompatibility and intrinsic antagonism of European and Arab identities, ways of being and thinking, the list of things, figuring in the short novel's afterword, that the author finds worth adopting from Europe is impressively – and conspicuously – long (Al-Khūrī 1860, 160–62). It shows that al-Khūrī is highly critical not only of the *mutafarnijīn* but of his own society as a whole, and that he does not shy away from registering many things that could, and should, be improved. Cf., e.g., the sharp words he finds about the litter and stinking dirt that make living in the East often rather uncomfortable:

This disgusting dirt [...] has its reason only in the fact that the people show themselves indifferent and nobody cares about removing the dirt, which pervades and contaminates the air we are breathing. Or perhaps the reason is...⁴³ – but we should say this with a lowered voice since we, the noble Arab people (*anna-nā ma'shar al-'arab al-kirām*), rarely find it convincing to commit ourselves to, and put our efforts into, something that is 'only' for the community's benefit. [...] Rather, when passing by a heap of refuse, we content ourselves with holding our noses, try to flee from the fetid and leave the contaminated environs. What does it concern us when our neighbours or friends die from it?!

(al-Khūrī 1860, 40–41)⁴⁴

This kind of almost sarcastic self-criticism is also in line with the view, expressed elsewhere (ibid., 13), that constructive criticism is something the Arabs should learn from the Europeans. To learn from the Europeans is not tantamount to betraying one's own identity or automatically becoming like them, for "scientific truths are not valid exclusively for *one* nation" (ibid., 162).

Both authors also agree, however, that the decision about what is worth, or not worth, to be learnt or taken from Europe has definitely to be left to *completely* educated persons who, like Midḥat's Rākım or the omniscient narrator in al-Khūrī's *Way*, are versed enough in their own *as well as* the foreign culture in order to be able to critically separate the wheat from the chaff. It is clear that for this purpose a *comprehensive* education that also includes Western knowledge, is essential and indispensable.⁴⁵ Accordingly, al-Khūrī is not only eager to give

⁴³ Elliptic sentence the remainder of which has to be guessed by the reader him/herself. From what follows it could be something like 'a lack of feeling of responsibility for the community' (or even 'an inclination not to care about filth?').

⁴⁴ Cf. also his complaints about fellow-countrymen who have been to Europe, but only to return from there with the most negative of Western achievements, although there would have been many useful things that are worth to adopt or copy (*Way*, 41).

⁴⁵ Cf. Bouquet 2020 on the Ottoman diplomat as both "gentleman" and "homme de savoir". It is obvious that the traditional cultural ideal of *adab*, comprising encyclopædic knowledge, high linguistic skill in the written language, good education and manners (Dupont 2010, 173–4), is

proof of his being at home in the Arabic literary tradition but also quotes, interprets, and criticises Lamartine (al-Khūrī 1860, ch. 3, esp. 22ff.);⁴⁶ he knows who Narcissus is (ibid., 25), uses foreign vocabulary such as “mythological” (*mitūlūjī*, ibid.) and concedes that his own translation of Lamartine’s verses is of a lower quality than the original and that Voltaire is perfectly right in saying that compared to an original, a translation is like the reverse of a fabric as compared to its front (ibid., 30). Last but not least, he is always able to see through Mikhālī’s *tafarnuj* as empty, false and anything but the ‘Europeanness’ it claims to be – no wonder since, as we know, the author is well versed in both cultures, Eastern *and* Western.

So is also Midḥat (’s narrator). He not only assumes that the reader knows Molière’s theatrical pieces (Mithat n.d., 190) but also makes quite an effort to let Felātūn’s lack of knowledge and education, both Eastern and Western, meet its exemplary counter-ideal in Rākım. Unlike Felātūn Beğ, Rākım continues after school pursuing with great ambition four years of vocational training; it happens quite often that instead of enjoying some off-time, he lets his Armenian friend lock him up in the library even over the weekend. In this way, he acquires new knowledge without the help of a teacher, or widens his command of Arabic grammar, logic, *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, and *fiqh*. He also reads and memorises large portions of the classical Persian poets; he improves his French⁴⁷ and his knowledge of world literature through extensive reading of novels, drama and poetry; in addition, he studies physics, chemistry, anatomy, geography, history, law, etc., and reaches an extraordinary level, far above average, in all of these modern disciplines (Mithat n.d., 23).

For Midḥat, the criteria for a decision about the adoptability, or the necessity to refuse, Western cultural goods are, first and foremost: *moderation*, the goods’ *innocuousness*, a *need* for a solution from outside, and their *well-considered* and *skilful* use or application. Being well equipped and happy with *alaturka* culture, Rākım does not really need any commodities or ideas that are imported from the West. Nevertheless the reader is made to appreciate the fact that the hero speaks a brilliant French and that he is interested in French literature. When he decorates his home with wallpaper and paintings, hangs

expanded here so as to encompass also corresponding knowledge about and skills in *Western* culture.

⁴⁶ On Lamartine as one of the favorite French authors to be translated into Oriental languages in the late nineteenth century, cf. Strauss 1994, 157.

⁴⁷ For the importance of French language acquisition in the context of Ottoman diplomacy, cf. Bouquet 2020, section “De l’émissaire au diplomate”.

mirrors on the wall and uses a canapé (as the Europeans do), this is not described as an act of aping European lifestyle but as an indication of a *fine taste* (ibid., 45–6). Also, when Rāḳım buys clothes *à la mode* for his beloved servant and later wife, Cānān, and when he lets her take piano lessons, Midḥat does not have any objections against that or describe it as an ‘un-Turkish’ contradiction of the *alaturka* way of life – on the contrary, it is counted as yet another proof of Rāḳım’s generosity, love, fine education and culture. – Although Rāḳım, as a Muslim believer, usually abstains from alcohol, there is nothing to say against his having a glass every now and then, particularly so when he is among Europeans where it would be impolite not to drink together with the host (ibid., 62). Even less objectionable it is to consume local *rakı*; for, in a traditional *alaturka* company of drinkers, it enhances the spirit of friendship and sociability (ibid., 115). Some bigots may regard dancing as offending religious teachings, but for our narrator it is out of question that a modern, cosmopolitan Ottoman should know how to dance. However, Rāḳım dances only at European parties, and refrains from polka and waltz because he always gets dizzy (ibid., 67–8). When Rāḳım has European guests at home there is nothing to say against women and men mixing freeling in one room (ibid., 140–41). And when Felāṭūn Beğ complains about having to mourn his father the European way and therefore being surrounded “from all sides by black, like the night”, Rāḳım replies:

Yes, the Europeans have this custom. But why should that mean that we, that is, we Turks, should have to follow this rule? To have the Noble Yāsīn [surah] recited on Friday in memory of the deceased, ... [is a good indigenous tradition that we should continue to observe, there is no harm in it].

(ibid., 95)

Compared to Midḥat, al-Khūrī is more utilitarian. Only those achievements that have *proven* to have a *useful function* should be considered for adoption. Especially those that are known to have helped the Europeans advance could and should be put in the service of the *umma*. For instance, no objection is to be made against wearing gloves or stockings since they protect from cold and are a nice adornment (al-Khūrī 1860, 33). In contrast, smoking (cigars, cigarettes) is harmful; taking this habit from the Europeans means importing a disease (ibid., 43). In contrast, Arab musicians who have bought European instruments and learnt how to play on them, even though perhaps not without the help of supporting notes, are to be praised for this since they enrich cultural life (ibid., 31).

In a situation where, as al-Khūrī has it,

[the notion of] progress unfortunately has been contaminated [...] with many things that are potentially harmful to our indigenous way of life and may throw our society/community into the [vicious] circle of confusion (*dā'irat al-irtibāk*),

(ibid., 8)

both authors are eager to provide via their novels some concrete, practical advice in life, and this is why al-Khūrī concludes his text with a morale that, implicitly and *mutatis mutandis*, can also be found in Midḥat's text:

Limit yourself to European sciences, knowledge and art and try to enliven Eastern culture in a way that is appropriate to the spirit of the Arab nation that [...] is rooted in a tradition of fourty generations. Be a cultured Arab, not an incomplete European.

(ibid., 163)

4.6 Europeans proper

The presence of 'real' Europeans in the countries of the East does not seem to be a major problem for any of the two authors, although they register in their novels some rather negative traits. According to al-Khūrī, many are ignorant, arrogant (*jibāl min al-kibriyā' wa-l-da'wā*, al-Khūrī 1860, 5) and condescending towards the native Arabs (cf. the way Edmond treats his host Mikhālī). Compared to this, the Europeans Midḥat creates in his novel, esp. the piano teacher Mme Jozefino and the British Mr Ziklas, are more positive characters. They are, however, not free from faults either: Jozefino seduces Rāḳīm and makes him her lover (Mithat n.d, 62); and Mr Ziklas shows the 'typically European' materialist thinking that has difficulties to accept Eastern *karam*. It is almost an offence for Rāḳīm when Ziklas wants to pay him for having come to see his sick daughter: "Such a kind of selfishness is perhaps to be found with you Europeans – with Ottomans like us it is unknown" (ibid., 153). And the wife, Mrs Ziklas, shows racist traits similar to those of al-Khūrī's Edmond when she vehemently opposes marrying her daughter to Rāḳīm, one of "those Turks" (ibid., 157). Nevertheless the reader is never made to think that it is the Europeans present in the country who should be blamed for the *mutafarnij's* / *alafranga züppe's* stupid and ridiculous behaviour – this is clearly the latter's own fault.

On the other hand, both authors also underline that one should meet Europeans and everything European with a good deal of scepticism and sound mistrust, for a nice appearance often is rather deceptive – as is made more than clear in the person of the false "count" Edmond.

Irrespective of their being positive or negative characters, however, Europeans often fulfil an important function in the narrative texts of the time. As

Rotraud Wielandt has convincingly shown, the role that authors like Midḥat or al-Khūrī assign to European characters can tell us a lot about intellectuals' attitude towards the West. The role Wielandt called the “*certifier-on-call*” (Bestätiger vom Dienst) is played by “count” Edmond in al-Khūrī's story while in Midḥat's novel it is distributed between the Ziklas family and Mme Jozefino. It is one of the most important tasks of these characters in both novels to confirm and explicitly ‘certify’ that those who emerge from the narratives as the better ones are right also from *their*, the Europeans' perspective. *The ultimate authority in questions of adab is thus conferred upon the representatives of the hegemonial powers.* As also in other texts of the time, the presence of such “certifiers” can therefore be interpreted here, too, as “a strong indication of an already broken self-confidence”.⁴⁸ Al-Khūrī seems to be less affected than Midḥat by this broken self-confidence. This is evident from the fact that “count” Edmond's primary – though not exclusive – function is to brand the *mutafarnij*'s ignorant imitation of everything European and thereby to ‘turn state's evidence’ in that the author is right in his refutation of *tafarnuj*. In contrast, Midḥat's Europeans (while also serving the purpose of unmasking and condemning ignorant Euromania) first and foremost have the function to acknowledge the superiority of *alaturkah* over their own European culture. Al-Khūrī obviously does not yet feel the same need as Midḥat to provide, by way of positing the East's cultural superiority over the West, an ideological-psychological compensation for the factual loss of economic and political power at the hands of mighty Europe.

4.7 Adab as the art to make the right choice between the Eastern and the Western way

So far, the analysis of the two sample texts does not leave any doubt that, by the mid-nineteenth century, the political, economic and cultural hegemony of the West had begun to pose a challenge to Middle Eastern societies. As the role of “certifiers-on-call” assigned to European characters in fiction shows, the loss of political and economic power had resulted in a loss of cultural self-confidence. While intellectuals like al-Khūrī and Midḥat probably were not aware of this themselves (nor of the inferiority complex they had built up deep inside them), they nevertheless registered as an alarming signal the often unquestioned admiration for everything Western that was growing in Middle Eastern societies. Was not the emergence of the ‘Europhile fop’ a clear indication of the degree to

48 “Indiz für ein bereits gebrochenes Selbstbewußtsein”, Wielandt 1980, 57.

which undesirable aspects of Western civilisation were rooting themselves in one's own society? Western civilisation could no longer be seen as something that left the identity of Middle Eastern societies untouched: the 'Europhile fops' were native, indigenous people, and the hegemonic culture thus had started to creep into local societies and become part of their very bodies. (This is perhaps the reason for the – exaggerated – *em-bodi*-ment of the 'need' to adapt to the hegemonic Western culture in the character types of the *mutafarnij* / *alafranga züppe*). How to behave in such a situation of confusion about one's own identity? This was a moral-ethical question, i.e., a challenge in terms of *adab* (in the sense of manners, behaviour, and ethical values). Under the strained conditions of a quasi-colonial situation, with a hegemonious West on one side and an 'outgunned', 'backward', 'inferior' East on the other, the moral-ethical choices one had to make began to be interpreted as *cultural* choices, choices between two ways of living and two sets of values, or *ādāb* (in the sense of cultures): an 'unauthentic', 'Frankish' or Westernising one, and an 'own', 'authentic', 'indigenous', 'Eastern' one.

4.8 *Adab* and literature

As in premodern times, questions of *adab* like these continued to be discussed and negotiated in the type of writing traditionally associated with normative ethics: *adab* literature.⁴⁹ Although *Way*, *idhan lastu bi-lfranji!* and *Felāṭūn Beğ ile Rāḳım Efendī* both already display a number of traits (first and foremost, a reality-referenced fictionality) that make literary historians usually classify them as early *novels*, i.e., representatives of *modern* (= Western-type) Arabic/Turkish literature, they still show much continuity with the older type of *adab* literature, in the sense of a writing that is both entertaining and edifying. As texts that enjoyed a much wider distribution than handwritten books, they address a much broader public than their predecessors and therefore try to combine the entertaining fictionality of 'light' 'popular' story-telling (*1001 Nights*, folk epics, etc.), traditionally regarded as 'low' literature, with the seriousness of ethical treatises and other 'highbrow' *adab* literature. Certainly, both texts *do* have a plot and a continuous storyline (*Way* even more so than *Felāṭūn Beğ*) and thereby display a key feature

⁴⁹ Cf. Bouquet 2020 who observes (in section "La nouvelle *adab* : la langue des diplomates") that the style of notes taken, letters written, travelogues etc. composed (in French) by Ottoman diplomats abroad obviously bases itself on, and clearly shows a continuity with, the style of *inshā'* / *inṣā* used until then in official documents.

of modern fiction. This remains, however, rather superficial, with the dominant structural principle still being that of a sequence of episodes interrupted by the omniscient narrator’s (here still to be taken as more or less identical with the author’s) explicitly explaining and interpreting comments. Apart from creating an atmosphere of entertaining diversity, the episodes narrated serve two main functions, reminding of *adab* encyclopedias:⁵⁰ (a) they provide the reader with comprehensive *knowledge* about the topic dealt with; and (b) each episode sheds light on the one major *ethical* topic from a new, different perspective.

4.9 Emotionalism and the ‘nobility of the feeling heart’

What is definitely and primarily new about this new *adab* (literature) is, however, its *emotionalism*, a sentimentality that often borders on, or runs over into, sheer lachrymosity, combined with exaggerations and black-and-white categorisation. Both texts (Midḥat’s more than al-Khūrī’s, which, quite significantly, is the earlier one) are eager to underline their *moralising*, *normative* messages by creating *moving*, *pathetic* scenes that appeal to the reader’s *heart*. Thus, al-Khūrī’s narrator, who usually is rather economic and concise in his descriptions and reports, quite conspicuously goes into detail when he tells the reader about the *suffering* a representative of the *wujūd ahlī*, Émilie’s faithful fiancé As‘ad, undergoes when he first is betrayed by Émilie and she later asks him to return to her. The same narrator also stays quite a while with Émilie and her *pain* and *tears* when she comes to know about the alleged count’s true identity and his sudden disappearance/flight. Moreover, the author chooses to let the story end *tragically*: in an attempt to forget the disappointed lover’s grief, As‘ad leaves the country; nobody knows for how long and whether he will regain emotional balance abroad; Émilie then decides to spend the rest of her life in a monastery as a nun. Emotionalist aspects can also be observed elsewhere in *Way*, for example in some passages on poetical criticism that are woven into the text. In these, al-Khūrī’s narrator) says that he is convinced that poetry should be of the kind that *appeals to the heart* (al-Khūrī 1860, 18) and “leaves a lasting impression on one’s *soul*” (ibid., 20, my italics), and that the true poet is the one who “lets people *feel* what he *feels* himself” (ibid., dto.).

Emotionalism is even more present in Midḥat’s Felāṭūn Beğ, perhaps due to the fact that the text came out later, one and a half decades after al-Khūrī’s *Way*

50 Cf. the continuation of this type of writing in the *adab* manuals for diplomats in the Foreign Service as described by Bouquet 2020, section “Le nouvel *adab* : *habitus* et bonnes manières”.

when the *efendiyya* had grown again. As already mentioned above, a feeling heart like that of al-Khūrī's As'ad counts among the foremost traits that also Midḥat uses for positive characterisation. For Rāḳīm emotions matter so much that the piano teacher Jozefino for him, unlike actress Polini for Felāṭūn Beğ, never is just a *metres* (mistress) but always also a good friend (Mithat n.d., 77). We have also seen above that Rāḳīm not only feels pity with Joan, one of the British girls, when she is ill; he also feels sincere pity for Felāṭūn Beğ wherever he makes a fool of himself and when he is finally sent to a remote island (ibid., 70, 171–72). The narrative turns particularly emotional also wherever feeling hearts become aware of some miraculous luck that is bestowed upon them, for example when the poor orphan Cānān is overwhelmed by what Rāḳīm grants her although she is a poor orphan and, moreover, his slave (ibid., 110). The Text gets highly sentimental also when Rāḳīm's mother, immediately before she dies, says that she would be dying in peace now because her most ardent desire – to see her son making his career – seems to be fulfilled (ibid., 22). Another highly sentimental scene occurs when Rāḳīm, for the first time in his life having earned a lot of money with a translation, sits down weeping, together with his fostermother, out of happiness: if only it had been granted to his mother, “may she rest in peace!”, to share this moment with him (ibid., 25)! Very emotional scenes are also those in which noble hearts decide to renounce (e.g. Jozefino who, although still loving Rāḳīm, renounces her love in favour of her favorite pupil, Cānān; ibid., 79).

Emotionalism/sentimentalism in this *adab* can be read as a mode of expression of the *efendiyya* class who have emerged from the modernising and secularist reforms of the first half of the nineteenth century as a new '*troisième état*', between the masses (Ar. *al-ʿamma*, Ott. Tu. *re'āyā*, or just *rāyā*), on the one hand, and the traditional elites (*ʿulamā* etc.) and the upper class (*khāṣṣa*), on the other.⁵¹ Like the European bourgeoisie in the process of emancipation, the new Middle Eastern 'middle class', too, has continuously grown over the past decades and in this process also gained self-consciousness as an emerging important player in society. And just like the emerging European bourgeoisie, the new Middle Eastern middle class expresses the fact that they have begun to 'feel themselves' with a recourse to the emotionalism/sentimentalism just described. As in the sentimentalism of the European age of Enlightenment, it seems that the emphasis on a 'nobility of the feeling heart' here, too, serves the function of compensating for a lack of 'nobility of blood', religious prestige and/or material

51 Cf. Dupont 2010, 175, who explains the linguistic choices made by the emerging “public writers” as informed by the need “to satisfy two conflicting demands: to please the ‘elite’ (*khāṣṣa*) while being understood by the ‘common people’ (*ʿamma*)”.

affluence. Later on in the century, and then especially on the eve of World War I, emotionalism will culminate in the pathetic, larmoyant, melodramatic outcries of writers like Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān or Muṣṭafā Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī, outcries that accuse the ruling classes of oppressing the ‘simple and pure’, in this way implicitly claiming political rights for the middle class that has not yet been assigned a role that would correspond to their grown importance in society.⁵² This, however, is not yet the case in *Way*, nor in *Felāṭūn Beğ*. None of the two texts makes political claims (at least not explicitly). They rather seem to confine themselves to the domestic sphere and to creating, within this framework, the above-mentioned ‘nobility of the feeling heart’ in order to legitimise the fact that they have become subjects (i.e., ‘heroes’) of printed literature. Moral/ethical ‘beauty’ is the heroism of the emerging middle class⁵³ that in this way accumulates the symbolic capital that later will be equal to the other types of capital owned by the ruling classes, and will be capable of outdoing them. As for now, however, al-Khūrī, and also fifteen years later still Midḥat, seem to be satisfied with what has been achieved so far. In this, they resemble European authors of the so-called Biedermeier period (1815–1848), a period that preceded the 1848 revolutions, or of Victorian England where the bourgeoisie, in times of political restoration, retreated into the private sphere, cultivated and often even ‘celebrated’ family life and the idyllic ‘sweet home’; in this atmosphere, also bourgeois virtues like diligence, honesty, loyalty, faithfulness, modesty and sense of duty were turned into general moral principles.⁵⁴ The kind of *adab* that is promoted in works like *Way* and *Felāṭūn Beğ* seems to be inspired by that of the Biedermeier/Victorian age with its focus on the private, on bourgeois ethics, and emotionalism, and also with its self-satisfaction and complacency.

4.10 Conclusion

In the moral-ethical confusion caused in the course of the nineteenth century by European lifestyles swapping over into Middle Eastern everyday worlds, and under the pressure of a hegemonic Western value system, the newly emerged

52 Cf. my “*Fa-ghrawraqat ‘uyūnuhum...*” (1997b) = Chapter 11 in the present volume.

53 This can serve as an explanation also for the high degree of popularity enjoyed by translations of European popular fiction at the time. Cf. esp. Strauss 1994, passim. “Romans d’amour”, in particular, seem to have been so popular (thanks to the new large group of women readers, cf. *ibid.*, 146) that the sultan considered strict censorship as an absolute necessity (*ibid.*, 127).

54 Cf. also the skills mentioned as an ideal of girls’ education above, p. 95 with note 32.

Middle Eastern *efendiyya* took the lead in suggesting ways to deal with these challenges (and with the fact that one's own culture was being increasingly devaluated as the culture of the 'loosers'). The texts analyzed above can be read almost as manuals to help the readers to make their choice in the question of what to adopt from European civilisation and what to retain from one's own traditions, manners, customs, and values. As this was a question of the right *adab*, it was negotiated in belles-lettres, i.e., *adab* literature.⁵⁵ Being themselves advocates of a secular reformism that, in general traits, sought to follow the *European* model (enlightenment, education, democracy, positive law, sciences, role of women in society, etc., all under the label of 'progress' and 'civilisation'), *efendiyya* authors staged the choice one had to make as one between an enlightened (= reformed) *wujūd ahlī / alaturkalik* (represented by the narrator, As'ad and Mikhālī's wife in al-Khūrī's *Way*, and by Rāqīm and the narrator in *Felātūn Beğ*) and a superficial, ignorant adoption of 'Frankish' appearances (Mikhālī in *Way*, Felātūn Beğ in Midḥat's novel). In other words, and as Einar Wigen has shown in his brilliant dissertation, *moderation* was the ideal also of this new *adab*: a *middle way* between slavishly clinging to tradition, on the one hand, and an unreflected adoption and ignorant imitation of everything Western, on the other.⁵⁶ With the ideal of moderation, of a well-reflected balance between Western and Eastern *ādāb*, both authors (and with them most of the *efendiyya* of the time) came very close to the type of moderation and set of values that is characteristic, again, of European Biedermeier and Victorian culture (cf. the quotation from a poem by Eduard Mörike, preceding this article). This, by the way, can also be seen in the middle position al-Khūrī and Midḥat take with regard to *woman*-related *ādāb* and male-female relations. As in Biedermeier/Victorian culture, both authors here, too, advocate a moderate emancipation of women without, however, questioning the overall patriarchal order and a cult of purity.⁵⁷ Al-Khūrī has severe criticism

55 For an analogous process of interpreting the challenges of modernity in terms of *adab*, cf. Bouquet 2020 who, with regard to questions of the right conduct of diplomats on foreign service in Western countries, speaks of embassies as "un espace d'extraterritorialité de l'*adab*": "Loin de peser sur l'intégration d'une modernité extérieure, l'*adab* offrait un cadre favorable à l'acquisition de nouveaux usages" – Bouquet 2020, section on "Politesse des usages, réalisme de la visée".

56 Cf. Wigen 2014, 126–33 (chapter on "Edep, Ahlak and a Bourgeois Sociability"). For the corresponding attitude in questions of language, cf. Dupont, where the author concludes that for literati like Jurjī Zaydān "language had both to be preserved as a heritage and modernized until it would be able to express the new realities of a changing world" (2010, 171).

57 Cf. the fact, noted by Bouquet, that Ottoman diplomats were, as a rule, not allowed to take their women with them to Europe. Bouquet 2020, section on "Les périmètres de la distinction".

for the fact that the woman in the *mutafarnij*'s house has no other position than that of mere furniture, "a chest, or a chair", as though "she did not belong to the human species" (al-Khūrī 1860, 7). Compared to such utterances, the author himself thinks much higher of women and accuses Mikhālī of treating his wife like a traditional despot (without however categorising this despotism as part of the *wujūd ahlī*). Although the text is not free from statements such as "[It is a wellknown fact that] women's desire for power and rule is generally stronger than true love" (ibid., 106), we find al-Khūrī making Mikhālī's wife, i.e., a representative of the female sex, his own, the author's, *mouthpiece*: it is her who, from the very beginning, warns her husband and tries to divert him from trusting the false *comte* Edmond (ibid., 61); it is her who defends the poor As'ad (ibid., 86–7); and it is her sceptical, down-to-earth attitude that proves to be right in the long run (ibid., 127) – so convincingly that Mikhālī eventually decides that it will be wiser to listen to her opinion and advice in the future (ibid., 129). Midḥat for his part stresses the value of women's *education*. The ideal is presented in Cānān who never tires to study her lessons and (like Biedermeier/Victorian girls) to do her piano exercises (Mithat n.d., 48) and who, as a result of this attitude, shows quick progress (ibid., 40–41). More important than education and learning, however, are *diligence* and *hard work*. As Cānān's negative counterpart, Felātūn's sister Mihribān is characterised as a spoiled rich girl who always had her servants work for her and therefore has no idea herself about the laudible skills that ennoble a middle class girl, such as sewing, embroidery, crocheting or knitting, washing laundry, ironing, or cooking. Not even her hair does she comb herself, for the hairdresser comes to her house. Because of her laziness she also learns nothing and does not make progress in her piano lessons (ibid., 18–19).

In spite of the fact that education in girls is a sign of *adab* and therefore should become standard, neither Midḥat nor al-Khūrī seem to advocate a radical change in the patriarchal order, nor in the domains traditionally assigned to women.⁵⁸ In accordance with their emphasis on the feeling heart, both are advocates of (chaste) *love* as an essential ingredient in husband-wife relations. Nevertheless, al-Khūrī still supports Émilie's point when she argues, in a conversation with Edmond, that the traditional dowry (*mahr*) paid to an Eastern bride is an institution that should be maintained, because it demonstrates that in the authentic Arab *wujūd ahlī* women are held in higher esteem than their sisters in the West (al-Khūrī 1860, 111–12). In order to represent an ideal man-woman

⁵⁸ Cf. Bouquet (2020, section on "Hors du monde de l'*adab*"), with the additional remark that also the traditional view on society as a whole, its hierarchy, compartmentalisation, etc. *in general* remained unchanged.

relationship Midḥat goes even a step further: Rāḳım and Cānān start out as master and slave. But like al-Khūrī, Midḥat, too, *mitigates* the traditional ‘extreme’ by introducing a *moderate*, enlightened, women-friendly (‘Western’) interpretation of patriarchal rule: it is an ideal only if the man, like Rāḳım, is benevolent, complaisant and sympathetic towards the woman and does not abuse his power against her, and if the woman, in turn, shows herself as grateful for the man’s mildness and understanding as Cānān, who would prefer to remain a slave under a master like Rāḳım to a life as a free *hanım* without him (Mithat n.d., 77–79, 89–91).

5 Concepts that changed the world

Waṭan as one of Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī's "Eight Key Concepts"

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This chapter: The understanding of *adab* that we will meet in the chapter below resembles the one observed in the preceding chapter to a large extent. Like Khalīl al-Khūrī's and Aḥmed Midḥat's novels, al-Marṣafī's *Epistle* takes up pressing issues of its time to discuss them in detail, from several angles, and with as many of its relevant implications as possible. All three examples of Middle Eastern *adab* from the second half of the nineteenth century give proof of the authors' eagerness to refer to contemporary realities, and show *udabā'* who conceive of themselves as public intellectuals whose task it is to contribute to their societies' progress with critical analyses and well-informed guidance in times that are experienced as an age of large-scale transformation and corresponding challenges. For al-Marṣafī, who is writing at the beginning of the 1880s, Westernisation seems to have become so ubiquitous and 'normal' that he no longer asks himself, as al-Khūrī and Midḥat still may have done, whether the process of Westernisation might still be reversible, nor does he seem to be as concerned as they were about issues of cultural identity and possibly negative moral consequences. What matters most for him, as a person of rural background, is applicability in *practice*, advantages and disadvantages of certain types of technology, or ideas, be they labelled 'Western' or 'Oriental'. Apart, perhaps, from a more sober nature and, as an Azhar-trained scholar, a sceptical attitude towards novels as a genre of fiction, i.e., of much fantasy and supposedly unrealistic imagination, al-Marṣafī's wellknown disposition as a practitioner may have been the reason for him not to have chosen to 'dramatise' his ideas in a novel, but rather stick to the conventional genre of *risāla* ("epistle", or "treatise"). Therefore, most of his *adab* lacks the new emotional, dramatising dimension that we observed in Khalīl al-Khūrī's and Aḥmed Midḥat's texts in the preceding chapter. Nevertheless, his *risāla* is a fine example of emerging/emerged subjectivity at work, albeit with a

¹ Because in al-Marṣafī's day the term *risāla* still had a rather broad meaning, I will refer to his text as the "Epistle" or the "Treatise" interchangeably.

focus on ‘sober’, ‘unemotional’, ‘dry’, ‘scientific’, scholarly discussion of his topics. But this, too, is *adab*, and like al-Khūrī’s *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji* and Aḥmed Midḥat’s *Felâtun Bey ile Râkım Efendi*, al-Marṣafī’s *risāla* is also a fine document of the ‘reproductionist’ phase of nineteenth century Middle Eastern modernity.² For, as the chapter will demonstrate, al-Marṣafī’s way of treating his subject matter, the eight “key concepts” of his time, among them *waṭan*, consists essentially of an ‘*adabtation*’, an attempt by the author to deal with the phenomena and challenges of his time with the help of a traditional template, viz., the *risāla*. In doing so, he seeks to harmonise the demands of modernity – the key concepts that need scholarly comment and informed interpretation – with a traditional approach, the discursive methods provided by classical philology, i.e., by *adab* techniques. With this ‘classicism’, al-Marṣafī’s *Risāla* is clearly characterised by that “individualising reproduction of the general and lawful” that is typical of the Resultant component of ‘global’ “Reproductionism”. Other important elements constituting this “individualising reproduction of the general and lawful” are, by the way, the many quotations from the Quran and the Prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*) with which al-Marṣafī seeks to support his arguments.

For an example of a Nahḍa text that combines both, classicist approach and creative fiction, see below, Chapter 8, where we will discuss the structure of one of the *maqāmāt* that form part of Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq’s *al-Sāq ‘alā l-sāq fī-mā huwa l-Fāryāq* (1855).

Within “Reproductionism”, both Midḥat’s *Felâtun Bey* (1875) and al-Marṣafī’s *Risāla* (1880/81) belonged to the third phase, classified as ‘concretisation phase’ in Walter Falk’s periodisational terminology. For each ‘global period’, Falk identifies three phases: an initial one (“phase of marking”, *Markierungsphase*) in which first signs of a new way of experiencing the world are marked as surprising turns in the plot or the result; a second one (“phase of visualisation”, *Visualisierungsphase*) in which protagonists (and authors) become fully aware of the main traits of a new period; and a third one (“phase of concretisation”, *Konkretisierungsphase*) in which the conclusions reached in the Resultant component of the overall PAR structure³ appear as necessary supplement, or complement, to the main idea of the Potentiality component. The latter is the case both in *Felâtun Bey* and the *Risāla*. The most prominent feature in the Potentiality components of both texts is the tendency, felt everywhere in contemporary everyday life, to use modern artefacts, techniques, and ideas to leave the good old world behind with

² For a brief presentation of “Reproductionism” and other ‘global’ periods, see above, (end of) introduction to Chapter 4, and for further discussion (incl. references) see Chapter 18.

³ PAR = Potentiality – Actuality – Resultant; see above, introductory section to Chapter 5.

the aim to hopefully reach a better life. The artefacts, techniques and ideas themselves are quite well known by the time, and a general need for reform and progress is accepted in principle and no longer in question. What is needed, however, is a detailed concretisation of how the new and modern can be harmonised with the old and traditional. Both texts provide a multitude of such details, a feature that serves as a concretisation that appears as necessary complement of what was in need of detailed supplementary elaboration.

* * *

5.1 Introduction

The author and the text that form the focus of this article, Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī and his *Risālat al-kalim al-thamān* (“The Epistle of the Eight Words/Concepts”), are not completely unknown to previous studies of the history of modern Arab thought. Yet, although the *Risāla* is mentioned in quite a number of overviews and has even become the subject of a lengthy article (Delanoue 1963), I believe it has not yet received the attention it deserves, both for its wide influence and the deep impact it had on its author’s disciples, and as an example of how Western concepts became ‘naturalized’ in a period of emerging Arab/Egyptian national self-consciousness. As I hope to be able to show, the *Risāla* can be read as a document of “indigenous self-assertion.”⁴

5.2 The author

The author himself is interesting in more than one respect.⁵ To begin with, al-Marṣafī (who was born in 1815, lost his sight at the age of three, and later studied at the *riwāq* of the blind at al-Azhar) was a most influential and inspiring teacher for such ‘celebrities’ as Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Bārūdī, Aḥmad Shawqī, ‘Abdallāh Fikrī, Ḥifnī Nāṣif, and even Muḥammad ‘Abduh. This is due to his teaching at Dār al-‘Ulūm, the Teachers’ Training College. ‘Alī Mubārak, then Minister of Education,

⁴ This expression is inspired by the subtitle of Bardenstein’s *Translation and Transformation* (2005). As I attempt to show, we are dealing here not only with a case of “Dressing French Texts in Arab Garb” (the title of Bardenstein’s ch. 3), but also, and more so, with one of “Bringing it all Back Home” (ch. 4), i.e., with a case of indigenous integration.

⁵ Biographical information in the following is gathered from Delanoue 1963, Delanoue 1989, and Ziyāda 1982.

had called upon al-Marṣafī to help ‘design’ this College, and it was there that al-Marṣafī taught, as its first teacher, from the College’s very foundation in 1872 until 1888, when poor health forced him to retire.⁶ He died only two years later, in 1890.

Second, al-Marṣafī is interesting because he can be regarded as a representative of a rather large group, perhaps even the majority, among the late nineteenth-century Egyptian educated elite: a group that, in my opinion, has not received sufficient scholarly attention because they were not as spectacular as, on the one hand, the secularists and political journalists of the time and, on the other hand, the Afghānī-Riḍā-‘Abduh group who advocated Islamic reformism (or reform Islam, *iṣlāḥ*).

A third fact that makes al-Marṣafī interesting is his rural background. Although he probably was born in Cairo, his family had a background in a village in al-Qalyūbiyya province, and al-Marṣafī seems to have always had contact with the countryside, kept himself informed about what was going on there, and also brought a rural perspective to his writings (as we shall see shortly).

5.3 The *Epistle*: general importance and background

Risālat al-kalim al-thamān, the “Epistle on the Eight Words/Terms/(Key) Concepts”, is not a piece of literature in the modern sense of the word, but a rather prosaic treatise. Its significance for *Visions and Representations of Homeland in Arabic Literature*⁷ is mainly in two aspects: first, it demonstrates what key concepts of nineteenth-century political discourse, like *umma*, *waṭan*, *ḥukūma*, or *ḥurriyya* which, as al-Marṣafī says, were “on the people’s lips” (lit., “tongues”: *‘alā alsinat al-nās*, 39) in those days, meant to a tradition-oriented, rather ‘average’ educated person with a rural background like al-Marṣafī. Second, it illustrates how new ideas from outside the country were introduced into an existing set of concepts or way of thinking. That system, however, I will argue, was not ‘literature’ in the modern sense of the word, but *adab* (which at the time still rather meant “culture” in general than “literature”, which is a more recent development; cf. Guth 2010b, *passim*).

⁶ At Dār al-‘Ulūm, he formulated a general program that was taken up by many of his pupils. “This programme for reviving the language was gradually spread through almost all the Arab countries – with or without reference to al-Marṣafī – from the last years of the nineteenth century, thanks to the efforts of the reformists”: Delanoue 1989.

⁷ I.e., the volume edited by Sebastian Günther and Stefan Milich (2016) where the present chapter was published for the first time.

It is true that the concepts of *umma*, *waṭan*, *ḥurriyya*, etc. themselves were already in use when al-Marṣafī wrote about them – most of them are found as early as in al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's writings⁸ – and it is also true that, in his interpretation of these concepts, al-Marṣafī is neither particularly innovative nor does he present in-depth analyses or programmatic explanations of them, since he is more of a practical spirit than a theoretician (as will be pointed out in section 5.4, below). Yet, it was apparently due to this practical inclination and his pedagogical talent that he became 'Alī Mubārak's first choice for the job at Dār al-'Ulūm which made him become so influential among his contemporaries. And although, in terms of content, there is probably not much in the *Risāla* that goes beyond al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's *Takhlīṣ al-ibriz fī talkhiṣ Bārīs* (published in 1834) or his *al-Murshid al-amīn lil-banāt wa-l-banīn* of 1872, al-Marṣafī seems to have his finger on the pulse of his time, an assumption that is corroborated by the fact that the book was republished in 1903, this time edited by Muḥammad Mas'ūd in the newspaper *al-Mu'ayyad*.⁹ Indeed, the treatise was written shortly before the 'Urābī uprising and published shortly after the event, i.e., at a time when, as Delanoue rightly observes, the defense of the country was “à l'ordre du jour”: the press was incessantly talking about foreign interference and the exploitation of the fellah by foreign usurers, about too many foreigners occupying too many administrative posts, and about the latest conquests of the colonial powers (Delanoue 1963, 11; my translation). Perceived as a treatise on key concepts of the time, it was eagerly read by contemporaries, particularly in the winter of 1881–1882 when Egypt was living through revolutionary days and public discourse revolved around such issues as having a constitution, the pros and cons of a parliament, the limitation of powers, etc. (Delanoue 1963, 5).

⁸ They have, however, no entry yet in al-Taḥānawī's *Kashshāf* (1745), nor do they appear with a non-classical meaning in al-Zabīdī's *Tāj al-'arūs* (cf. vol. 26, 260–61, in the 2001 edn). Al-Marṣafī is therefore, despite the terms' currency, one of the first to turn them into entries in a work that is meant to be a kind of encyclopedia, paralleled only by Buṭrus al-Bustānī's *Dā'irat al-ma'ārif* (1876–82, remained incomplete, even after the project was resumed by his sons; the last volume, no. 9, appeared in 1887 and stopped at 'Sulayk', i.e., did not include 'waṭan').

⁹ I have not seen this edition myself, but rely on the data given by Delanoue 1963, 2, fn. 3: “2e éd. par les soins de Muḥammad Mas'ūd, rédacteur au *Mu'ayyad*, imp. al-Ġumhūr, Le Caire 1903, 144 p.”

5.4 ‘Waṭan’ in *al-Kalim al-thamān* – an analysis

Before examining the ‘homeland’ chapter more closely, let us first have a look at the *Treatise* in general and see which position the *waṭan* chapter is assigned within the text as a whole.

Al-Kalim al-thamān: General characteristics (including structure)

The eight “words”, or key concepts, that the *Treatise*’s title announces as its topic, are *umma* (nation, national community), *waṭan* (homeland, French *patrie*), *ḥukūma* (government), ‘*adl* (justice), *ẓulm* (injustice, despotism), *siyāsa* (ruling, politics), *ḥurriyya* (liberty, freedom), and *tarbiya* (education, instruction).¹⁰ Given that these concepts were in no way new and might even be considered to have been quite dated when al-Marṣafī decided to make them the topic of his *risāla*, Delanoue asks why the author did not choose others, e.g., *shūrā* (parliament), *qānūn asāsī* / *lā’iḥa asāsiyya* (constitution), *thawra* (revolution), *istibdād* (despotism), *musāwāt* (equality), or *ikhā*’ (fraternity), especially since these were much more prominent in journalistic discourse of the time (Delanoue 1963, 9).¹¹ He has no definite answer to this question but claims that al-Marṣafī’s choice should be explained by a wish to counterbalance the all too politicised climate in which one talked much about new institutions, without moral concerns or ideas about how to achieve all these high-minded goals in practice (ibid., 28¹²).

¹⁰ The English translations of the Arabic terminology given in parentheses here should be considered approximations only. The terms are all calques, i.e., loan translations (‘Lehnübersetzungen’) from the French in which a meaning borrowed from outside has been transferred to an indigenous Arabic word. As often when a term is not borrowed as such (i.e., as a recognisably foreign loanword), the newly acquired additional meaning is added to a word already existing in a language and the new meaning interferes with the old one and often produces ‘hybrids’ (which, from the perspective of the donor language, sometimes may even appear to be misunderstandings or ‘wrong’ translations). It is the purpose of the present article to show what can happen to a term like French *patrie* when it becomes Arabicized. For the semantic history of political and sociological vocabulary during the *nahḍa* in general, cf. especially Monteil 1960, Hourani 1962/1983, Rebhan 1986, Lewis 1988/1991, and Sawā’ī 1999; see also my own studies Guth 2010b (on *adab*) and Guth 2011 (on *riwāya*, = Chapter 7 of the present volume).

¹¹ See the preceding footnote on the English renderings in parentheses.

¹² “Dans le climat passionné de l’actualité, [...] on ne s’occupait que de la politique, de création d’institutions nouvelles” while al-Marṣafī “parlait morale et éducation”.

[As] an advocate of a reasonable modernity, legitimized by constant reference to moral and cultural examples from the glorious ages of Islam[,] the author seems reserved and anxious about the haste of some (doubtless the partisans of ‘Urābī, officers, groups of intellectuals, and notables) who would like to modify institutions prematurely to create a true parliamentarianism.

(Delanoue 1989, unpag.)

Another possible explanation, according to Delanoue, of al-Marṣafī’s choice of eight slightly less than topical concepts may have been his predilection for educational subjects, a conclusion one is tempted to draw from the quite uneven distribution of pages in the *Risāla* in favour of *tarbiya*. In the edition printed in 1982 (arranged by Kh. Ziyāda), the chapters have the following lengths:

Chapter	Length (in pp.)
<i>umma</i>	20
<i>waṭan</i>	20
<i>ḥukūma</i>	9
‘ <i>adl</i> – <i>ḡulm</i> – <i>siyāsa</i>	1
<i>ḥurriyya</i>	3
<i>tarbiya</i>	46
Total	99

As is evident from this table, education was al-Marṣafī’s main concern. The *tarbiya* chapter not only occupies almost half of the book (it is the only one that the author divides into sub-chapters¹³), but, figuring at the end of the *Treatise*, it is also the book’s very culmination. That the text had a mainly pedagogical intention can also be inferred from the preface, in which al-Marṣafī says that with the *Risāla* he wanted to address particularly the *adhkiyā’ al-shubbān min ahl hādhihi l-azmina* (39). Reading this, Delanoue is reminded of a French textbook that stresses that “[l]e bonheur d’une nation est lié à l’éducation dès l’enfance” (Delanoue 1963, 24). On the other hand, the extremely short entries on ‘*adl*–*ḡulm*–*siyāsa* and *ḥurriyya* may either be explained by the same predilection for the

¹³ These are: *al-tarbiya* (“de l’éducation”: 10 pages), *al-murabbī* (“de l’éducateur”: 5 pages), *al-murabbā* (“du sujet à éduquer”: 7 pages), and *mā bi-hi l-tarbiya* (“des moyens et du contenu de l’éducation”: 24 pages) – titles translated as in Delanoue 1963, 23, length in pages as in the edition mentioned above.

question of education or, as some have read it, as an indication of the author's cautiousness in a precarious political situation.

Delanoue thinks that the whole *Risāla* is constructed “*d’une façon assez confuse*”, that it testifies to a rather unsystematic way of thinking and that, on top of this “apparent disorder”, it displays a great deal of naiveté in that it mixes “conceptions médiévales et [...] idées modernes mal assimilées” (Delanoue 1963, 10). I am convinced, however, that this is not true and that the *Epistle* is more structured than it may appear at first sight, and that we are not dealing with an example of naiveté but rather with a realistic world view (although frequently interspersed with commonplace advice and idealistic admonitions). We shall now take a closer look at al-Marṣafī’s approach, taking the chapter on *waṭan* as an example.

Waṭan

Al-Marṣafī starts by distinguishing two usages of the term *al-waṭan*. For the masses (*al-‘amma*), he says, the word signifies *tilka l-qit‘a min al-arḍ allatī ta‘muruhā l-umma* (“that piece of land [or: the Earth] that is inhabited by the nation”, 62). In contrast to this ‘*ammī*’ (“popular”; today one would probably say *sha‘bī*) understanding of the term, there is however also the *khāṣṣī* one, i.e., that of an educated elite (*al-khāṣṣa*). For them, *al-waṭan* is not only the homeland of the nation, but has the much wider meaning of a *maskan* (“dwelling place”) in general; as such, one can apply it in many contexts: the senses (*idrākāt*) are housed by the soul (*rūḥ*); the soul is housed by the body (*badan*); the body is housed by the clothes (*thiyāb*), etc. – continuing further outward, through *dār* (“house”), *darb* (“road, alley”), and *madīna* (“town”) to *quṭr* (“country”), *arḍ* (“earth”) and, finally, the most comprehensive of all – ‘*ālam*’ (“world/universe”). The arrangement of the terms here follows a hierarchy of ‘spheres’ reminiscent of the Neo-Platonic model, in which the next higher and more general sphere includes the lower and more specific one:

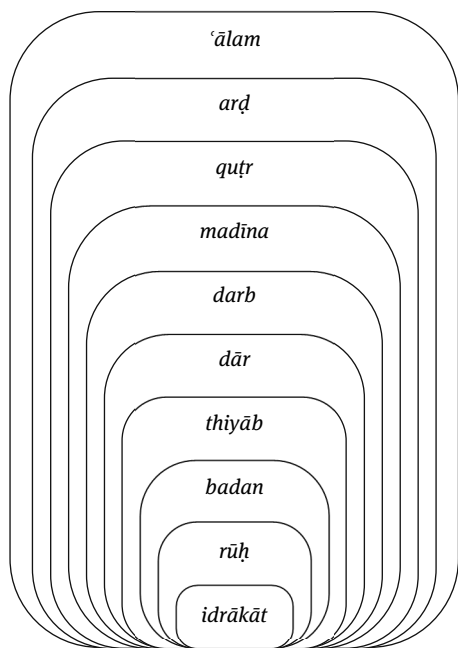


Fig. 1: ‘Neoplatonic’ hierarchy in al-Marṣafī’s arrangement in his treatment of the term *waṭan*

This definition is followed (after some general remarks) by a discussion of the present state of affairs in Egypt along these lines, i.e., taking *badan*, *thiyāb*, *dār*, *darb*, *madīna*, *quṭr*, *arḍ*, and *‘ālam* as starting points for remarks on a large variety of subjects, ranging from the textile industry and sheep breeding to the cultivation of cotton and the use of fertilizers, to the deplorable condition of roads and the increased traffic in Cairo. Delanoue calls this “*détours*” (deviations), which he does not consider worth pursuing (Delanoue 1963, 16); but I think the rather traditional way of arranging his material and the quite demanding language (a much more difficult Arabic than that of contemporary journalism) should not mislead us to overlooking (a) that the author conforms to a pattern (rather than losing his way) and (b) that all this is done for a very *modern* purpose – the ultimate end of al-Marṣafī’s treatise is the Egyptian nation’s well-being and the spirit of patriotism (*waṭaniyya*) which he says should guide all educational efforts in the country.

The author's approach in the *waṭan* chapter is very much a *philologist's* formalistic one. The fact that the classical dictionaries equate *waṭan* in a very general sense with *maskan*, the "seat" of something, allows the philologist to pull out all the stops and open the discussion of the concept by setting a formula for *encyclopedic diversification* within the framework of the concept: From "*waṭan*" he proceeds to 'x as a *waṭan*=*maskan* of y', in the literal as well as the figurative/metaphorical meaning. In this way he generates a new series of terms – *badan*, *thiyāb*, *dār* etc. – each of which can serve as a starting point for the discussion of details. The issues he picks out for discussion, however, are not chosen at random; on the contrary, all are issues of relevance for the *nation*, i.e., the Egyptian *umma*, or his own *waṭan* (taking the word in its '*āmmī*' sense). So, what we are faced with here is a traditional operation (philological association) in order to discuss modern, nationally relevant issues with an almost encyclopedic ambition. We can call this an '*adab*-tation', a treatment of the modern topics according to the rules of classical *adab*.

In order to do this, al-Marṣafī assigns each of the possible meanings of *waṭan* something to which it is entitled – he calls it *ḥaqq* (Delanoue translates this as "un statut qu'il faut respecter"; Delanoue 1963, 16) – and consequently talks of *ḥaqq al-badan*, *ḥaqq al-thiyāb*, *ḥaqq al-dār*, etc., thereby arriving at some kind of norms that compatriots should observe or obey for their "bodies", "clothes", "houses", etc. to function properly. In all these cases, al-Marṣafī's ultimate frame of reference for this 'functioning properly' is Egypt as a whole.¹⁴

For the sake of brevity, the following pages present but a brief summary of the "rights" that al-Marṣafī says should be observed in order to maintain the proper functioning of the "homelands=seats" that he focuses on in his discussion of the *waṭan* concept:

***badan*:** The body has a right to be kept healthy and taken care of. So it is its owner's duty to observe personal hygiene, to see to physical training (luckily, God Almighty, in His wisdom and benevolence, has granted the believers an incentive for this by making the daily prayers obligatory), to dress the body in clothes that suit the season, to feed it, etc.

***thiyāb*:** The clothes are entitled to be kept clean, a claim that al-Marṣafī says is supported by a *ḥadīth*. In addition, everyone should know what the clothes he

¹⁴ As Delanoue (1989) observes, there is also an element of purification in the Shaykh's approach: "The matter of greatest urgency for al-Marṣafī is the spreading among the élite as well as the masses of a reformed education (*tarbiya*, *adab*), modern in some of its forms, but based on an Islam whose faith and practices would be purified of the innovations (*bida'* [...]) accumulated during the ages of decadence."

or she wears are made from and ensure that the type of material continues to be available. So, from mentioning silk, wool, and cotton, al-Marṣafī easily directs his encyclopedic discourse to silkworm breeding, the raising of sheep, and cotton planting. There is almost no indigenous silk production anymore, he says, and wonders: why? Aren’t there reports from classical times about Egypt being a center for this craft? A similar lack of interest is to be noted also with regard to sheep: the “people of our country” (*ahlu bilādīnā*) have neglected sheep farming, and as a consequence, expensive foreign sheep are being imported. Given the high quality of Egyptian wool, however, it should be easy for anybody gifted with “rational thinking and insight” (*al-fikr wa-l-naẓar*) to understand that sheep breeding should be encouraged for the sake of the “common welfare and the benefit of the nation” (*al-maṣāliḥ al-‘āmma wa-manāfi‘ al-umma* – very typically, al-Marṣafī here addresses the intellectuals, *ahl al-fikr wa-l-naẓar*, and argues with reference to Egypt’s public weal). The deplorable lack of sheep in Egypt has two main causes, the author continues, leading the reader now from economic considerations to social questions: first, the lower classes are too poor to buy animals and start breeding them; second, the land where sheep could be kept is used by the rich to produce expensive things, with the only aim of getting the money to buy unnecessary, and also un-Egyptian, luxury goods such as mirrors or furniture with ledges or shelves made of marble on which to place scent bottles and little jars of ointments, body lotions, and hair gel. The Shaykh sets the tone here for a discussion of social issues that he will return to and deepen on several later occasions, namely the idea that the class differences in Egypt are too great and that the rich should refrain from pursuing egoistic goals in order to allow the social gap to narrow; for this, in the end, will make society more stable and secure. – As for cotton, the author is not against it but warns that its cultivation is a full-time job and cannot be done alongside other professions, as is currently practiced. Furthermore, due to the expansion of cotton growing, the famous Egyptian linen (*kattān*) from which clothes for kings and emirs were made and the *kiswa* of the Holy Ka’ba used to be woven, has disappeared from the market.

dār: Choose the right place to erect your house! Houses used to be built a bit above the level of agriculture. Nowadays, the soil is often taken to gain fertilizer, so the houses have come to be on an equal level with the fields, which makes them highly susceptible to water damage. Today, everybody talks about fertilizers, many collect their cattle’s excrement and urine as dung and liquid manure, and much else is done without proper knowledge, although the traditional method of fertilizing the fields through the annual flooding of the Nile seems to be more effective. So, let scientists analyze the various kinds of fertilizers and

decide which is best in which case for which kind of crop! A science-based analysis would certainly lead to a ban on taking down the traditional little house hills. (Again, al-Marṣafī is talking to the *ahl al-ma'rifa*, “the knowledgeable”, here, and it is obvious that his traditional Azhar education in no way prevents him from making use of the knowledge and techniques of contemporary natural sciences.) – The discussion of what the *dār* is entitled to leads the author further to discuss building materials and the question of maintenance and repair as a question of responsibility toward the next generations and fellow citizens in the homeland (*waṭan*), supported by a *ḥadīth* saying that the reward for someone who builds a house will be the profit drawn from it by other human beings (*man banā binā'an kāna lahū ajrahū mā 'ntafa'a bihī khalqun min khalqi 'llāh*, 73).

***darb* and *madīna*:** The idea of solidarity and cooperation for the well-being of all is also followed in the sections on *ḥuqūq al-darb* and *ḥuqūq al-madīna*. For the neighborhood as well as the whole city, the condition of the roads is important. Al-Marṣafī here opts for introducing the Western system with the coaches, horses (and maybe even donkeys) having to obey traffic rules on regular right and left tracks, rich and poor driving (or lining up) on equal terms behind each other, while the pedestrians stick to pavements on either side of the road. In this way, he says, one will prevent the current situation of people crowding the roads like cattle huddling around the drinking trough, with coaches speeding around knocking down pedestrians or squeezing donkey carts to the house walls. He also supports the idea of giving each coach a license number and tag to facilitate tracking down offenders. Once these and similar improvements are achieved, the police will have increased capacity for fighting crime, which will make life in town more secure.

***quṭr*:** Al-Marṣafī remains very general here, although for him *al-quṭr* is Egypt. What is interesting, though, is that for his discussion of the *ḥuqūq al-quṭr* he returns to what he had said about *al-dār*, now using the “house” as a metaphor for the Egyptian state: to build a solid *dār=quṭr* you will need good planners, good building materials, good workers, etc. Anyone who dwells in this house=country should enjoy peace of mind (*suknā, rāḥat al-qalb*) and good health, and should be in good form and happy. Overall happiness can be achieved if everyone tries to moderate his desires and aspirations; and when everyone feels safe and secure, they will easily consent to performing collective duties; for example, to help dig a canal or temporarily serve in the military. – There follows an excursion into national history to show that the three main obstacles that al-Marṣafī believes prevented the establishment of a harmoniously balanced national community in

the past – the Mamluks, the Beduins,¹⁵ and the village *‘umdas* – have been solved already by Muḥammad ‘Alī... or at least nearly solved, since the *‘umad* have preserved at least *some* of their former privileges, such as the right to take for themselves a sheep or a cow when someone’s child gets married, or the *ius primae noctis*, i.e., the right to spend the first night with each new bride, a custom that still causes a lot of violence in the countryside.

arḍ: The paragraph on *ḥaqq al-arḍ*, i.e., what Earth is entitled to, serves the author as an occasion to develop some ideas about international relations. The fact that, according to him, national identity is, first and foremost, a question of language; that because of the big differences between languages nations will not mix; and that, at the same time, nations *have* to deal with each other to gain access to each other’s natural resources, etc., makes international treaties and laws and the establishment of good relations necessary. This task is something that cannot be achieved by the masses (*al-‘awāmm*) who are made for bodily work, but only by the elite of *dhawī l-‘uqūl al-nayyira wa-l-afhām al-ṣaḥīḥa wa-l-ārā’ al-nāfidha min ahl al-dhakā’ wa-l-fiṭna* (“those among the intelligent and bright ones who have enlightened minds, the right understanding, and convincing opinions”), who are as few in number as are the prophets whom God has sent to humankind (80 – a passage more than indicative, in its almost blasphemous likening of the men of enlightenment to messengers with divine missions, of the leading position the author claims for the new reform-oriented educated elite). There is a natural aggression (*ṭabī‘at al-‘udwān*) among the nations, like egoism among individuals, and it is the enlightened intellectuals’ task to make the others understand that it makes more sense to work together for common goals and the “interests/concerns of mankind [or: Humanity]” (*muqtaḍayāt al-insāniyya*) than to fight against others for the sake of purely national interests.

‘ālam: The very last section on what the world is entitled to gives the previous section an even more universal framework and is reminiscent of the “Think global!” slogan of our own times. The world was given to humankind as a whole so that they may profit from it, enjoy its gifts, and thereby perceive God’s mercy and benevolence (*raḥma*). So, in everything one does, the preservation of the world as a whole, as God’s creation, should always be the ultimate goal. At the same time, everything in the world being a sign with a meaning, it can be a starting point from which to draw knowledge and understand God’s wisdom. Al-Marṣafi here obviously follows the widespread etymology that derives *‘ālam* from *‘ilm* (“knowledge”) in the sense of “something that can, or should, be known”. With this turn, he comes back to his favorite concern – learning and education.

15 The author here mixes Bedouins with Gypsies (cf. 77, fn. 20 by the editor, Kh. Ziyāda).

As a whole, the *idrākāt* → *rūh* → ... → *arḍ* → '*ālam* structure mirrors very appropriately two main characteristics of al-Marṣafī's thinking and approach: it is both *hierarchical* (bottom-up) and *holistic, organic*.

The *hierarchical* component is not only an expression of a desire to treat reality scientifically and systematize the world. It also implies, as an aspect of this, a view of mankind and society along hierarchical categories. Al-Marṣafī does not envisage a radical change in the prevailing social order, because he takes the general division into '*amma* and *khāṣṣa* as an expression of God's will. The '*amma/khāṣṣa* division is complemented by the division of mankind as a whole into two categories:¹⁶ those made to work with their bodies and those made to work with their mind or intellect, and it is the latter upon whom the duty to lead the former is incumbent. They should do so with the help of simple rules, as if they were handling camels, which you teach to stop or go on certain commands and which in turn will obey if addressed correctly. In this way, the intellectuals/educated are assigned a prominent role within the elite: it is they who should have the power of "commanding right and forbidding wrong" (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar*, cf. Delanoue 1963, 12), i.e., to exercise legitimate authority.¹⁷

The hierarchy also implies that the more general is superior to what is lower in 'rank', i.e., to the specific and individual. Therefore, the well-being of all, the common interest (*al-maṣlaḥa al-'amma*), should be given priority over individual concerns, and relations among individuals should be governed by the search for what is best for all/the whole. In principle, *al-maṣlaḥa al-'amma* should not be too difficult to obey, since common sense, or intuition, easily knows what is right and what is wrong, what should have priority over what. But in case of doubt, the intellectuals should interpret and guide rightly.

The *holistic* and *organic* components inherent in al-Marṣafī's way of arranging his subject matter correspond to his holistic and organic vision of God's creation, in which everyone and everything have their place according to the function they fulfil in the whole. For the system (world/universe) and its subsystems (earth, individual countries, social classes, etc.) to function properly, everyone should know his/her function and accept the place assigned to her/him in the preordained hierarchical social order.¹⁸ Hierarchical order and the holistic character of the system overlap and complement each other, for example on the level

¹⁶ For the author, this division seems to be not only a matter of belief, i.e., a religious truth, but also a fact that can be proven scientifically. To learn which group a person belongs to, one may use the science of physiognomy (*firāsa*). Cf. Delanoue 1963, 25.

¹⁷ For the concept, cf., e.g., entry "al-Amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar", in *EI*².

¹⁸ « Il est sûr qu'il veut une société hiérarchisée, mais où chacun ait sa place. » Delanoue 1963, 25.

of the *umma*: as the ‘higher organism’, the *umma* will be well if its citizens find among themselves a harmonious balance between egoistic incentives (which may be good for the nation’s economy and its civilizational progress) and solidarity with the poor (which is necessary for the maintenance of social peace as well as from a moral point of view). As can be seen from this remark, the author also integrates economical and social considerations in his treatment of the current situation, a fact that again underscores the integral, holistic character of his approach (cf. Delanoue 1963, 28). It goes without saying that, as a scholar trained at al-Azhar, our Shaykh always has a quotation from the Quran or a *ḥadīth* ready to support his argument; but he may also weave a pleasant anecdote or a personal experience into his discourse, or compare human behaviour to that of animals (Delanoue 1963, 10), illustrating that not only is the system in accordance with the Creator’s will but that many – nay, (if not) all aspects of reality and life form part of it.

5.5 Conclusion

Being an educational treatise, not a work of fiction, Ḥusayn al-Marṣāfi’s *Risālat al-kalim al-thamān* is not abundant with literary visions and representations of the homeland. Yet, the Shaykh’s way of organizing his discourse about *al-waṭan* and of ‘representing’ it through a number of examples can tell us something about the way a new concept like the French term *patrie* was integrated into an inherited system of thinking (indigenous appropriation) and its imagery.

This way was at once traditional *and* reformist – and this was evidently the secret of the *Risāla*’s success. With its jump from the concrete, ‘popular’ meaning of *al-waṭan* via lexicography (*waṭan*=*maskan*) to the world of imagery (*a* as a ‘home’ of *b*, *b* as a ‘home’ of *c*, etc.), it fulfilled, on the one hand, the traditional aesthetic ideal, realized above all in poetry or *inshā’* (high chancellery style), to jump from reality into the world of similes, metaphors, metonymies, etc. On the other hand, while poetry or *inshā’* would remain in this sphere, i.e., on the abstract level of beautiful words connected with each other through semantic (tropics) or phonological (paronomasy) overlapping, in this way stressing the “self-referentiality of literary language” (Hamarnah 1998, 231), al-Marṣāfi *jumps back* from there to the reality, or realities, of *al-waṭan*, from the heroic concept of *la patrie* (or the popular understanding of “*al-waṭan*”) via lexicography back to sheep breeding and cotton growing, to the disadvantages of animal dung and urine as fertilizers and the advantages of, and hence the necessity to return to,

the traditional ways of manuring and fertilization through flooding, to the principles of international relations as well as man's responsibilities and duties in, and hence his accountability for the well-being of, the world as a whole.

If this work falls in the category of *adab* – which I firmly would argue¹⁹ – we note a turn to 'realism' that is very similar to the turn made by writers who began to stick to new genres like the *riwāya*²⁰ (which operated on yet another representational model) at the threshold from 'traditional' (classical and post-classical) to 'modern' literature. It is the same turn that can be observed overall in literary writing from the 1860s on, first in theater, then also in other genres;²¹ the turn away from language and philology as self-referential toward the "referential function of literary language" (Hamarneh 1998, 231) which from this time forward will be one of the main characteristics of 'modern' Arabic literary discourse.

19 Delanoue too thinks the *Risāla* is not only an "esquisse d'un lexique politique" but "aussi un ouvrage d'*adab*, où il s'agit de distraire autant que d'instruire" – Delanoue 1963, 10.

20 Cf. Guth 2011.

21 Cf., e.g., Haist 2000, in particular her notes on the early historical novel's 'realism'; Guth 2003b, *passim* (follow references given under the heading "Realismus" in the Index).

6 What does it mean to design a plot?

Space, time, and the subject's agency in the new narrative genres of the 19th century

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This chapter: In histories of modern Middle Eastern literatures, the emergence of the new narrative and dramatic genres (the novel, the short story; theatrical plays and operas) is typically contextualised as a process resulting from massive political and social change¹ and European cultural influence (study missions, translations, etc.). However, little attention has been given so far to the psychological-anthropological dimension of what the introduction of the new genres and the ‘modernisation’ of the literary system actually meant, for authors and their audiences alike. As genres are expressions of world views, the replacement of an existing set of genres by a new one is tantamount to a massive epistemological and cultural-historical re-orientation, a fundamental shift in the way human beings view the world around them and interact with it, a process also during which identity is at stake. What exactly did that mean for writers and readers in the nineteenth century Middle East?

This chapter argues that the most essential feature of the new, ‘pragmatic’ genres was ‘worldliness’ (*factualism*) cast into fictional plots, combining the *objectivity of the world* with a *subjective approach* to it. In this way, the new genres became, for the emerging Middle Eastern subjects, a site of discovering, experiencing, testing out, and asserting their new identity and agency: as *rational*, intellectual, thinking, critically analyzing subjects; as *feeling* subjects on whose bodies and souls the interaction with the world showed; as subjects whom these emotions *ennobled* and made into members of the imagined global community of a ‘modern’, civilised humanity; and as *creative* subjects who had the freedom and capacity to re-create the world according to their own views. The chapter explores what the *emplotment of the world* actually meant for the authors in terms of the essential choices they had to make – topic, characters, settings, structure, language –, given, on the one hand, an inherited set of ‘high’ and ‘popular’ genres and the prevalent literary taste, and their wish to assert their subjectivity, on the other.

¹ Omri 2008, 248, even speaks of an “overcontextualisation”.

The chapter is arranged here in Part III, which is about genre transitions; but with its interest in the anthropological-psychological dimension of these transitions it could likewise have been placed in Part IV, which will ‘single out’ certain narrative markers of emerging subjectivity seeking to assert itself, such as satire and the new emphasis on the narrating “I” (in Chapter 8), on first attempts to mediate between rationalism and emotionalism in an aesthetics of “truth mingled with passion” (Chapter 9), and on the authors’ moralism (Chapter 10) and emotionalism (Chapter 11), all likewise read as expressions of the (middle class) subjects’ wish to assert themselves. – In the present section, Part III, meanwhile, the focus is on *continuities and ruptures*. It shows the newly emerged subjects in their attempts to come to terms with the new *from within* existing traditions, so that we can observe two epistemic systems approaching each other, overlapping, intermingling. In all these cases we become witness of a complementary ‘fusion’ of traditional (‘Oriental’) *adab* with modern (Western-style) *literature*, so that we can speak of the ‘*adab*-tation’ of (European-style) literary genres and a concomitant ‘*literatur*-isation’ of *adab*. In Chapter 4, we saw (from the example of two early Arabic and Turkish novels) that traditional *adab* is taking over new functions and the writer, as a public intellectual, is becoming an arbiter and guide who is expected to master the ‘art of making the right choice between local tradition and new Western values’. In Chapter 5, we could observe how Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī treated the new concept of ‘homeland, fatherland’ (*waṭan*) with the help of old, tried and tested *adab* techniques, to the effect that these techniques proved to be applicable indeed, but *adab* simultaneously underwent a modification in that it was made to follow the author’s turn to realism (while the reality of the ‘here and now’ had been subjected to a ‘philologicalisation’ and ‘*adab*-tation’ in the beginning of the *Risāla*’s treatment of the term *waṭan*). While Chapter 7 will continue in this same line by following the mutual rapprochement of the indigenous term *riwāya* and the ‘foreign’ *novel*, this present chapter turns to the very essence of the new genres, the plot and its main features.

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6.1 Space and time... and the subject’s agency in the world

According to the Egyptian literary critic Jābir ‘Uṣfūr (Gabir Asfour), the gradual shift from a *poetry*-based aesthetics in which linguistic beauty had stood central, to narrative *prose* (and drama) was accompanied by a shift away from “the moment”, as the domain of poetry, to “space and time”, as the domains of the

novel and drama.² The processes of *spatialisation* and *temporalisation* addressed in 'Uşfür's observation point to the new role that space and time began to play in Middle Eastern literatures, as novels and dramatic pieces have *plots* while poems usually don't. Thus, it seems worthwhile to have a closer look at the implications of what it actually means to have a plot.³ On the other hand, this feature cannot be the only one that made novels and theatre so attractive for nineteenth century authors and their public, as plots are found also in some premodern genres, esp. the *maqāmāt*,⁴ popular drama (including shadow plays), and popular story-telling (the *Arabian Nights*, heroic epics, love romances, etc. – see below).

'Uşfür nevertheless comes close to the essentials. As *European* literary history teaches us, *spatialisation* and *temporalisation* are the consequences of yet another and still more fundamental process, namely that of *secularisation* and the concomitant *emancipation of the human subject* in the era called Modern Times, or Modernity (cf. Protestantism challenging the Church's authority, the Scientific Revolution promoting empirical observation as a new method of approaching the world, Humanism's focus on the human being, etc.). Taken together, these developments meant, first and foremost, a turn away from the Hereafter to the Here and Now as the major point of reference and orientation of one's life; second, and as a result of the first, a new interest in the human being and its perspective (cf. the spread of central perspective in painting and architecture; Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*, i.e., making the existence of the world dependent on the perspective of the thinking-reasoning subject); third, combining the other two, the *subject's agency* in this world, interacting with it and effecting change in it.⁵ Corresponding developments can be observed in literature: a focus on the human subject, its perception of the world and its experiences in it.

2 Uşfür 1999, 2nd rev. edn 2019 (under the title *Zaman al-qaşş: shi'r al-dunyā al-ḥadītha* "Narrative Time [or: The Time of Narrative]: The Poetry of the Modern World"). – The difference between poetry and the genres that involve action is known also in Western literary studies where fiction and drama can be addressed as the "pragmatic" genres, i.e., those having *prāgmata* 'deeds, acts', i.e., events, where things not only *are* (as in poetry), but *are done, happen*.

3 For an introduction to plot and emplotment in general, see Dannenberg 2010, or Kukkonen 2014.

4 Short anecdote-like stories in elaborate rhyme-prose (*saj'*), told by a first-person narrator, about a smart and eloquent *pícaro*/trickster (often a beggar or rogue); the origins of the genre date back to the fourth/tenth century.

5 For a brief account of emerging subjectivity in Europe, cf., e.g. the entries "Subjekt" (W. Mesch), "Subjekt-Objekt-Spaltung" (id.), "Subjektivismus" (H. Gronke / P. Prechtl), and "Subjektivität" (M. Esfeld), Prechtl and Burkard, eds. 1999, s.vv.

Recalling ‘Uṣfūr’s two categories, space and time, we see that they encompass the above-mentioned central aspects of Modernity: *spatialisation* mirroring the increased importance of the world, the worldly, the environment in which the human being moves around and with which it interacts; and *temporalisation* corresponding to the world’s operating on the subject as well as the subject’s own agency, its capability of effecting changes in this world, both necessarily unfolding *in time*. The latter is tantamount to the subject experiencing *causality*, i.e., the world’s impact on the course of the human being’s life and, still more important, the impact of the human subject’s own agency on the world – in a way, the subject itself becomes a kind of ‘God’, a little creator.

In the following, I will elaborate in more detail on the implications that come with the above-mentioned changes, in the Middle Eastern literary genre landscape as well as, mirrored in it, Middle Easterners’ attitude towards the world. At the same time, I will contrast the aspects of the *modern* genres with what they could or could not tie in with among the *traditional* genres, with the aim of highlighting, on the one hand, continuity with the past and, on the other hand, fundamental differences between the pre-modern and the modern worldviews that needed major intellectual and psychological accommodation.

6.2 Referentialism – the fictionalisation of the factual world

One major consequence of the subject’s turn to the world was nothing less than that this world (and the subject acting in it as part of it) now became the topic of fictional narrative, a world narrated in fiction. This may sound banal from today’s perspective; at the time, however, it came as a veritable revolution and therefore often caused considerable confusion as to the ‘ontological’ status of narrated/staged events. Of course, “that is *not* to imply”, as R. Allen rightly remarks, “that the premodern Arabic literary heritage did *not* have its share of narratives of various types” (Allen 2014, my italics) – as examples, he mentions the *maqāmāt*, Ibn Ṭufayl’s (d. 1185) *Ḥayy b. Yaqzān* and the “Epistle of Forgiveness” (*Risālat al-ghufrān*) by Abū ‘l-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī (d. 1058), all of which “clearly invoke imagined worlds to achieve their generic purposes” (ibid.). One should probably add also the animal fables in the tradition of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* and, mostly in the Persianate tradition, the great national-mythical⁶ and (erotic-

6 E.g., Ferdowsī’s *Shāhnāme*, or the old Turkish *Dede Korkut* stories.

)mystical epics,⁷ as well as, from the oral heritage of popular story-telling, the entertaining stories of the type found in collections like the *Arabian Nights* or the Turkish *Karacaoğlan* or *Kerem ile Ash*, not to forget the extensive heroic epics typically recited by professional storytellers during the long Ramadan nights or on similar occasions.⁸ However, while popular story-telling never had been treated as something referring to the real world – it counted as purely fantastic (*khurāfa*⁹), belonging to the realm of incredible ‘lies’, without any foundation in reality, hence also without an acknowledged literary-aesthetic value – the fictional genres of the written tradition derived their recognition as valuable cultural products (*adab*) from the degree of rhetorisation (linguistic refinement, as in the case of the *maqāma*) or their edifying/educational/philosophical-discursive purpose (animal fables, national and mystical epics, the above-mentioned *Ḥayy b. Yaqzān* and al-Ma‘arrī’s *Epistle*): the former were appreciated, like poetry, as intriguing fireworks of wit and a fascinating play with meanings and sounds, while reference to the real world was secondary, serving the subordinate function of supplying an additional (not particularly necessary) titillation. In contrast, the latter always *had* an element of reference to the real world,¹⁰ but only indirectly, via the intended applicability of the examples told, their implied moral benefit. However, in none of these genres were the narrated events believed to have taken place in a concrete real space and time¹¹ because the real world was not considered the domain of fiction but that of facts, i.e., the topic of factual accounts, of history, *tārīkh* (with all its subgenres, particularly the *sīra* or *tarjama* ‘biography’, *ḥadīth* ‘reliably transmitted report, news’, *khavar* ‘news, information, anecdote about a real-life person’, and the *riḥla* ‘travel account’). A typical marker of factuality was the *isnād*, the chain of transmission, opening the narrative with the enumeration of the

7 All composed in rhyming couplets (*maṣnavi*), e.g., Neẓāmī’s *Khosrow o Shirin* and *Leyli o Majnun*, or the story of *Yusuf o Zuleykḥā* from Jāmī’s *Haft awrang*. Not a love story but of equally mystical content is Faridoddin ‘Attār’s *Manteq oṭ-ṭayr*.

8 I.e., the popular epics, such as the *Sirat ‘Antar b. Shaddād*, etc.

9 Generally used to denote ‘incredible tale, ridiculously impossible story’: legends, fables, myths, incl. the *Arabian Nights* – Abdelmeguid n.d., 19–20.

10 Cf. Stefan Leder’s remark (1998) that, “[w]hen reading these texts, the assumption of factuality, and the impression that there is narrative fiction involved, are almost constantly conflicting perceptions” – qtd. in Allen 2014.

11 Cf., for the Ottoman-Turkish context, Dino 1973, 14: “L’absence de rationalité, sur le plan temporel et spatial, qui caractérise ces récits est le reflet de la permanence d’une vision du monde archaïque, conditionnée par le statisme fondamental de la société et de la culture turque-ottomane” (my italics).

transmitters and their source. It signalled authenticity and credibility and was there to guarantee that these were facts, not fiction, and that human fantasy had not invaded the world of facts and distorted their truth. (In Arabic, the word for ‘fact’ and ‘truth’ is one – *ḥaqīqa!*!) Exceptions from this ‘rule’ seem to be the *riḥālāt* (non-fiction, but without *isnād*) and the *maqāmāt* (fiction, but with opening *isnād*), but these are in fact no genuine exceptions: as first-person narratives, the travelogues are *per se* perceived as first-hand accounts and therefore do not need an *isnād* to be counted as reports about the real world;¹² and in the *maqāmāt*, the initial *isnād* only serves as a device of parody, imitating (factualist) scholarly discourse – for the listener, it is always clear that this *isnād* is fake and the *maqāma* narrator is not part of the real world. Thus, the strict separation, in the Classical tradition, between the two spheres, fact and fiction, was kept intact also in these two cases.

In the meantime, this fundamental structural distinction did not mean that factualist accounts could not be rhetorically embellished to achieve a ‘value enhancement’ – the highly ornate chancery style (*inshāʾ*),¹³ originally used to aestheticise official correspondence but often also applied in historiographical writing, is a good case in point. Yet, even in these cases did the scribe not alter the ontological status of his material; he would add internal rhyme (*sajʿ*), metaphors, similes, paronomasia (*tajnīs*, play with sounds), etc., but this would never mean turning it into a piece of fiction. The idea to use fiction to achieve (via ‘formula’-like symbolic representation) a higher degree of truth than in factualist historiography was not very widespread in the *premodern* Middle East, so that a fictionalisation of history/facts would have meant turning reality into ‘mere’ fantasy, an act of ‘illegitimate’, reality-distorting intrusion by human hubris into the world of facts, of ‘objective’ history, or even an attempt to imitate God and his creation of the world.¹⁴ For a *modern* author, in contrast, it is

¹² This holds true even though many travel accounts contain mirabilia, e.g., about ‘exotic/strange creatures’ (*ʿajāʾib al-makhlūqāt*).

¹³ Cf., e.g., H. R. Roemer, “*Inshāʾ*” [2012], in *EP*².

¹⁴ This is not to say that the premodern Middle Eastern literary heritage did not know genres that made use of symbolic representation, cf., e.g., the *Karagöz* shadow plays with their character types, or fables like those of the *Kalīla wa-Dimna* collection, featuring animals endowed with human traits. None of these, however, takes place in the real world, and the featuring characters are non-human (puppets in *Karagöz*, animals in the fables). The shadow plays’ and other genres’ relation to non-fictional reality may have been reflected upon occasionally (on a Neo-Platonic basis), e.g. by ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (1641–1731) (I am grateful to a reviewer of the present article/chapter to have reminded me of this fact); but shadow puppets nevertheless always remained *perforated*, to make sure that the puppets could and should not by any

essential to underline exactly this subjective intervention, to express his own agency by highlighting that the world gets changed by human agency and by emphasising that, in the narrative about the world, the material has been shaped according to the author's view and his own creative choices.¹⁵ According to some theoreticians of literary history,¹⁶ form-giving is the marker of modernity *par excellence*: the world has become the *material* that the subject works on, and the subject expresses its being the 'master' of the world by giving the material a *form*, and it is this form-giving that is the very essence of modern aesthetics, hence also modernity in literature.

Thus, when Middle Eastern writers – presumably as early as in the 17th century – began to feel the wish to underline their own *subjective* approaches to the world, this wish expressed itself increasingly in the transformation of traditional forms and the gradual preference of newer genres, and in both cases authors tended to choose the 'twin pack' of factualist fiction to underline their agency in the world: *fiction* because it gave room to express the emerging subject's perspective and its feeling of freedom, emancipation, independence, agency, and power of form-giving (which, by the way, also explains the preference for genres with *plots*, as plots are the result of subjective form-giving: they turn the *fabula*, as Viktor Shklovsky called the merely chronological sequence of events, into a meaningful story, a *syuzhet*, in which the events may have been arranged differently, following a causality that shows a subjective perspective on them); and

means be believed to have a soul and thus be "real" living beings; see also note 26, below. – In other cases, where fictional elements were added to factualist accounts (as was not uncommon in travelogues), these additions served other aims than symbolic representation; mostly, they were meant to underline the strange-/otherness of the regions described and their inhabitants – see, e.g., below, 6.6 "Choices to be made (III): Space" (on '*ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt* "exotic creatures").

15 Earlier tendencies to highlight the agency of the narrating 'I' from within *traditional* genres can with high probability be regarded as indicators of the transition from a premodern to a modern attitude towards the world. In this context, we may mention (with my reviewer – thanks again!) authors like Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī (1688–1749; on him, see Elger 2004), Abū l-Barakāt Muḥammad al-Raḥbī with his *Nuzhat al-mushtāq* (ca. 1760) (see Sievert 2010), Abū l-Thana' al-Ālūsī (1802–1854) with his travelogues and the wonderful novel-like *maqāma* (see Masarwa 2011 and Reichmuth 2018); cf. also the analysis of some of R. R. al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's writings in McLarney 2016, where the author found that in al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's thought, "disciplinary training in *adab* is crucial to the citizen-subject's capacity for *self-rule*, as he submits to the *authority of his individual conscience*" – *ibid.*, 25 (my italics); furthermore, there is, of course, also the iconic Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq with his *al-Sāq 'alā l-sāq* (1855) (on the modernity of his way of using traditional genres, cf. Junge 2019a and 2019b, as well as my own study, Guth 2010a = Chapter 8 in the present volume; see also below, n. 55.

16 See, e.g., Willems 1996.

factualist in order to make clear that the point of reference for the critically commenting subject is the real world, the world of facts, especially the present, and that this fiction has to be taken as serious as if it were traditional non-fiction.¹⁷ This becomes evident also in genre terminology: novels and drama are never termed (Ar.) *khurāfa*, *uṣṭūra* or (Persian/Turkish) *afsāna/efsane* but either labelled (in Persian and Turkish) with the French word, *roman*, or (as in Arabic) with words that, in premodern usage, denoted an account of facts (*ḥadīth*, *sīra*, *tarjama*) or any kind of ‘story’ (*qiṣṣa*, *ḥikāya*) or ‘report, reliable transmission’ (*riwāya*).¹⁸ The bivalence (facts *plus* fiction, objective world *plus* subjective creativity) of the new types of narratives is evident also from the preference given to drama (incl. opera) and novels with historical or other ‘realistic’ topics, as, e.g., J. Zaydān’s historical novels¹⁹ or the social romances written by Salīm al-Bustānī and others:²⁰ all of these genres are fictional, but the events told in them are presented, or appear (on stage), *as if* they were real.²¹ This is true also for the early translations from French literature: however adventurous and/or romantic-pathetic – and as such reminding of traditional popular narrative – these texts may have been, there was still one remarkable difference between, say, *Kerem ile Ash* and *Leylâ ve Mecnûn*, on the one hand, and *Robinson Crusoe*, *Le*

17 No wonder then that Roger Allen saw “the primary generic purpose of modern fiction” in a “critical analysis of society” (no matter whether this feature showed in ‘modernised’ genres, like the neo-*maqāma*, or the newly introduced ‘Western’ forms, like the novel or drama); see Allen 2000, 167.

18 Cf. my “From Water-Carrying Camels to Modern Story-Tellers...”, Guth 2011 (= Chapter 7).

19 Quite significantly, Zaydān’s historical writings were influential also among Ottoman Turks of the early twentieth century and continued even into the early Republican era – Strauss 2003, 57.

20 For a detailed, though little analytical description of many of these romances, cf. Moosa 1997, 157–83 and 191–218.

21 It was exactly this *as-if* mode, the realist illusion, that fascinated the head of the Egyptian study mission to France, Rifā’a R. al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, when he made his first acquaintance with the theatres of Paris. He described the performances he attended there as “re-enact[ing] everything that has happened (*taqlid sā’ir mā waqa’a*)” by way of symbolic representation (*taṣwīr*): “for instance, if they [*sc.*, the French] want to imitate (*taqlid*) a sultan and the things that happen to him, they convert the stage to make it *look like* [my italics—S.G.] a palace, create an image of his character (*ṣawwarū dhātahu*), recite his poetry and so on and so forth. [...] In these spectacles, they represent everything that exists (*yūṣawwirūna sā’ir mā yūjad*)” – al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1834) 1993, 209–10 / English tr. Newman 2004, 229–30). – On al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s use of the term *taqlid*, cf. Schulze 1994. – Quite significantly, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s travelogue “was translated into Turkish in Egypt as early as 1839 and seems to have been popular with the Ottoman reading public” – Strauss 2003, 57.

Comte de Monte-Cristo and *Les mystères de Paris*, on the other:²² the translations are characterised by the absence of the supernatural and purely fantastic and in this way meet the new reading public's demand for *realist* fiction

6.3 Re-creating the world – The challenges of plot-designing

For the writers who preferred to try their hand at the new genres rather than attempting to reform inherited models, form-giving in narrative, i.e., the re-creation of the world from a subjective perspective, posed *the* major challenge,²³ as creative form-giving in narratives, i.e., the “discipline of plot”,²⁴ had, until then, not been a concept of art in the Middle East yet, neither in general²⁵ nor in literary production in particular.²⁶ As the examples of texts like those mentioned in footnotes 14 and 15 prove, the transformation of old, established genres was not impossible and, for a long time, also the most natural thing to do; for many, however, such genres seemed to represent sluggish resistance while more radical innovation was needed, and as soon as the new genres began to spread in the Middle East they soon became fashionable alternatives that seemed to give more ample room to subjectivity than the old genres did. It does not come as a surprise then that many an author decided to meet the challenge of new forms needed for a freer unfolding of subjectivity by translation, or rather adaptation, of existing foreign novels, dramas or operas. These stories could be reproduced as they were, or trimmed to fit the public's taste or the space available in a newspaper column, and they could also be made more realistic by ‘localising’ their settings and the names and features of the acting characters.²⁷ The big

²² For a list of novels that had been translated into Turkish before the first “genuine” Turkish novels began to appear, cf. Dino 1973, 52–53. See also Strauss 1994, 151–61.

²³ In Dino's words: “N'ayant d'autres traditions que celles des contes et des narrations qui (les « *mesnevi* » mis à part) ont leur source dans la tradition orale, il était difficile aux premiers romanciers turcs de découvrir des règles qui puissent leur permettre d'élaborer un récit continu, fondé sur la réalité, traité d'un style sérieux” – Dino 1973, 43.

²⁴ Omri 2008, 257.

²⁵ Cf., on the semantic history of Arabic *fann*, Mestyan 2011.

²⁶ *Ibdā'* ‘creativity’ was in itself suspicious, as the only power capable of creation was God, the ideal being harmony with the well-established tradition, *Sunna*, and God's well-arranged world order (*niẓām*). Etymologically, *ibdā'* is akin to *bid'a* ‘(heretical) innovation’.

²⁷ Carol Bardenstein has presented a fine analysis of the methods of domestication and the creativity implied therein, speaking of “indigenous assertions” (Bardenstein 2005, subtitle) made through Arabisation. It goes without saying that, as assertions of indigenous identity,

advantage with foreign texts was that the translator-adaptor did not have to invent and design a plot himself.²⁸ However, when Middle Eastern writers started to compose novels or dramatic pieces themselves, they found themselves faced with the very essentials, as a plot is a complex configuration and interplay of several elements: How to structure/form the “worldly” material, the factual world they wanted to write about? Which *topic* should they choose from this world? *Where* and *when* should the events of their narrative take place? What kind of *events* should be described? And how, from whose *perspective* should they be told? Who should feature among the story’s *characters*, i.e., become (via symbolic representation) the ‘heroes of the (fictional-factualist) world’? How should one describe these characters’ *interaction with the world*? How produce the desired effect of verisimilitude and rationality? What should be the logic of the narrative’s internal coherence? What kind of causality should be shown to be at work, how to motivate the characters’ actions? What *type of story* should be told: comical, tragic, edifying, contemplative? And which *language/style* should be used (by the narrator, by the characters)?

6.4 Choices to be made (I): The topic

As a matter of course, the choice of realistic topics was not in itself a problem, given that the many aspects of the world could easily be addressed, in the traditional genre landscape, by historical writings, in travel accounts, religious or philosophical treatises (*rasā’il*), etc. Moreover, since the 1860s, the private press – in many respects also a *presse d’opinion* – gave writers ample room to express their personal, subjective views on the world, utter subjective criticism, suggest reforms, etc.; after all, it is the time when the traditional *adīb* (‘man of letters’) transforms into the modern-type ‘public intellectual’ (*muthaqqaf*, *munawwar/münevver*),²⁹ strongly asserting his presence in the new discursive genre of the newspaper article (*maqāla/makale*). Nevertheless, drama and the novel, the

Arabisation also implied both the assertion of the indigenous “ego” and its *subjectivity* as well as an emphasis on the *factual*, the local environment met by the local subject as its *object*.

²⁸ Until quite recently, there was no word for ‘plot’ in Arabic. The term used today in literary studies to render the English technical term ‘plot’, *ḥabka*, does not appear with this specialised narratological meaning before the late 1970s in the dictionaries I was able to consult.

²⁹ On the intellectual, cf., e.g., Pepe 2019.

pragmatic genres, had a very strong additional appeal,³⁰ probably for two main reasons: first, these plot genres went beyond the ‘dry’ discussion of the pros and cons of a topic as done, e.g., in a *risāla*; rather, they allowed for a *dynamic* presentation, i.e., *temporalisation*, which was necessary in order to ‘destaticise’ the world and demonstrate its changeability³¹ (see below); second (and connected to the first), fiction had a still more intense focus on the subject as it allowed for the expression and treatment of *feelings*. It is for this reason that one topic gained specific attention: *love*.³² Not the idealised type of love, however, that was known from the ‘high’ literary tradition (poetry and the *meşnevi*, in particular): it is this “conception abstraite de l’amour, purement esthétique et littéraire, d’allure mystique, en quelque sorte déshumanisée, sans contenu psychologique ou érotique”³³ against which the modern writer has to develop his own new, modern-type love stories.³⁴ Modern love is the passionate, concrete, ‘worldly’ love as experienced in real life by the emerging subject, as an empirical “fait vécu, dynamique, pris dans l’intimité de la vie de chacun”,³⁵ so

30 Cf. Strauss 1994, 126: “Selon toute apparence, c’est le genre nouveau du roman, devenu le mode le plus répandu d’expression littéraire en Occident, qui fascinait le plus les Ottomans”. Even Sultan ‘Abdülhamid is known to have been an ardent reader of novels – *ibid.*, 126–7.

31 Philosophical narratives like F.F. Marrāsh’s *Ghābat al-ḥaqq* (The Forest of Truth, 1865), significantly one of the earliest examples of the novelistic genre in the Arab world, can be regarded as a combination of the discursive, ‘objective’ rationalism of *rasā’il* and newspaper articles, on the one hand, and the new ‘subjective’ novel writing, on the other.

32 Thus, not only translations from French (cf. Strauss 1994, 127), but also many of the narratives that are counted among the first examples of genuinely Middle Eastern novelistic fiction are essentially romances: cf., e.g., Vartan Paşa’s *Akabi Hikāyesi* (1851), Khalil al-Khūrī’s *Way! Idhan lastu bi-Ifranji* (1859), Salīm al-Bustānī’s *al-Huyām fī bilād al-Shām* (1870), Şemseddin Sāmī’s *Ta’aşşuḩ-ı Tal’at ve Fitnat* (1872), Aḩmed Midḩat’s *Felātūn Beğ ile Râkım Efendi* (1876), Nāmık Kemāl’s *İntibāh, veya: Sergüzeşt-i ‘Alī Beğ* (1876), etc. – Love stories were, by the way, also on top of the ‘bestsellers’ of *traditional* literature. Strauss 2003, 58, provides a list of what he thinks “was really ‘popular’ reading material” in the late 1880s in Istanbul. The most important category on this list are “the *hikāyes* from the Muslim tradition: the love stories of Kerem and Aslı, Aşık Garib, Tahir and Zühre, Leyla and Mecnun; Melikşah and Gülli Hanım, Tayyazade, Shah İsmail and Gülizar Hanım, Asüman and Zeycan, Shirin and Ferhad [...]”

33 As Dino 1973, 122, says about Nāmık Kemāl.

34 For a similar trend of ‘romantisation’ of a *traditional* genre, cf. Stefan Reichmuth’s fine analysis of an early nineteenth century *maqāma*, al-Ālūsī’s *Sağ’ al-qumriyya fī rab’ madrasat al-qamariyya* (composed probably already in 1822), see Reichmuth 2018.

35 Autobiographical statements as those by Nāmık Kemāl, quoted in Dino 1973, 132, clearly show that it were own feelings and personal experiences for which novelists like Kemāl sought adequate modes of expression (“en correspondance avec mes sentiments”, Kemāl in an article of 1876, tr. Dino).

that the writer has to achieve a “démystification de la conception quasi-symbolique ou allégorique” and a “révaloris[ation de] ce thème sous un aspect réaliste”.³⁶ The love narratives that have come down to us from the early years of the novelistic genre in the Middle East show that the transition from a premodern, idealising concept of love to a modern, more ‘down-to-earth’ one did, as a matter of course, not happen abruptly, from one moment to the next, but could only be achieved in a long process of negotiation during which many compromises had to be made, or were made unconsciously, in order to render a realistic love story acceptable to the reader. Thus, in the beginning, the role of the partner in a ‘real’ love relationship as represented in a novel or on stage was typically filled by an ‘angel’ who was of an almost ideal beauty, both physically and morally, described with an imagery that borrowed heavily from traditional poetry.³⁷ The writers did so in what is probably best described as a mixture of inexperience, lack of models to draw upon, and accommodation to conventional taste assumed to prevail on the side of the average reader: neither had they ever written psychologically realistic love stories themselves, nor would they find the like of it in their own literary tradition,³⁸ nor could they afford to do something that would have offended the reading public’s expectations and patterns of value judgment too brutally.³⁹ For instance, had the novelist not used an idealising poetical language and had the described ‘real’ romance not been given ‘heavenly’ traits, he might not only have been criticised for a lack of literary talent but also been accused of offending public morals by presenting obscene, ‘pornographic’ scenes, and all this in a coarse, ‘unprofessional’, perhaps even ‘disgustingly plain’ language. (It is well known, for example, that in early theatre performances the roles of female characters were played either by men or by Christian women, due to moral sensibilities on the side of a primarily Muslim

³⁶ Dino 1973, 121 and 131, respectively. – For similar tendencies in al-Ālūsī’s *maqāma*, cf. Reichmuth 2018, *passim*.

³⁷ Cf. Reichmuth, *ibid.*, on ‘romantic’ idealisation.

³⁸ Cf. N. Kemāl’s autobiographical statement in an article (1876) about “Love”, in which the author says he knew many ‘romantic’ pieces from the classical tradition, “mais je n’ai trouvé aucun d’eux en correspondance avec mes sentiments” – qtd in Dino 1973, 132.

³⁹ Building on Moretti’s idea that in cultural encounters, “the discernible manifestation of local form is related to narrative voice”, Omri rightly observes that the unease felt by many writers due to being torn between the wish to innovate and the constraints of traditional genre conventions typically shows itself in a narrator who “tries to dominate the plot and often loses control of it” – Omri 2008, 249. This is, of course, a legitimate way of explaining the strong presence of commenting, reasoning, criticising, moralising narrators in these early texts. At the same time, however, it is a clear indication of an emphatic assertion of agency – the agency of the narrating subject.

audience. As for literary language, we have several very valuable in-depth studies of the techniques of early ‘translations’ that highlight the enormous stylistic differences between source texts and their Arabic or Turkish renderings, revealing that the often simple, unpretentious language of the originals was, in the beginning, generally transformed into a rather ‘high’, canonised literary idiom, reminding of the *maqāma* or ornate *inshā’/inṣa*.⁴⁰ At the same time, describing worldly love with exquisite language and endowing the lovers with the best of traditional virtues functioned as a means of additionally ennobling the ‘subjectivation of the world’ so that worldly love, with all the emotions accompanying it – and *moving* scenes described in novels or presented on stage – could itself become a token of modernity and civilisation.⁴¹ Another way of saving face and simultaneously ennobling an own attempt at a modern narrative about ‘real’ love was to associate it with the Prophet Muḥammad and his praise of love as a token of humanity. In this way, a contemporary, ‘modern’ love story could be connected to Islamic humanism and likened to Prophetic *ḥadīth*, as an acknowledged form of factualist discourse about all aspects of human life, intimate feelings included.

While such and similar compromises with the aesthetics of traditional genres were usual, and apparently necessary,⁴² resulting in a constant dialogue

⁴⁰ Cf., e.g., the opening lines of Fénelon’s *Les aventures de Télémaque* (1695/96) and their renderings in the first Arabic and Ottoman ‘translations’, as compared to the original by Peled, 1979, and Özön (1936) 1985. The initial passage, consisting, in the French text, of short main clauses, 114 words in total, held in an almost colloquial language, is rendered in al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s version (1859, printed 1867) by no less than 202 words and in a highly sophisticated *maqāma* style, with internal rhymes, rare words, semantic, syntactic, and/or morphological/rhythmic parallelisms, much paronomasia (*jinās/tajnīs*) and ‘phantastic etiology’ (*ḥusn al-ta’līl*). In a similar vein, Yūsuf Kāmil Paşa’s Ottoman version (1859), though with 121 words only slightly longer than the French original, nevertheless resembles the Arabic rendering in its highly sophisticated, ‘elitarian’ language – cf. Peled 1979, 141–6, and Özön (1936) 1985, 119. – Dino rightly remarks that, in the early stage of transition from premodern to modern literary language, a less embellished style would have been experienced by the unprepared reader almost as an offence to good taste; therefore, a writer/translator felt that “cette nudité, pour ainsi dire, du mot, il lui faut l’habiller, la rendre présentable à son public” – Dino 1960, 572–3. For a similar study of the development of early *Arabic* prose style, cf. Cachia 1990, 43–58. – For *maqāma* and *inshā’*, see above, pp. 135 (note 4) and 138 (with note 13), respectively.

⁴¹ On the role of ‘civilising emotions’, see the writings of Margrit Pernau, esp. Pernau 2019 and (for an introduction) Pernau and Jordheim 2015, 1–18. – Cf. also my own study, Guth 1997b (= Chapter 11 of the present volume).

⁴² Omri addresses as “resilient” those formal features of traditional genres that continue to assert themselves in spite of a normative pressure to modernise. In contrast, a corresponding tendency to negotiate form can be observed also on the other side, i.e., that of the traditional

with tradition (Omri 2008, 256), the main effort made by many authors to go beyond traditional love narratives, both elitist and popular, consisted in designing a *psychologically motivated* plot in which the emotions and affects of the protagonists were the main driving force. The authors' eagerness to do so can be explained, again, from the new relevance of the world and the worldly. The interest in the emotional-psychological logic of a 'real' love affair corresponds to the 'new worldliness' in that it focuses on the love-experiencing subject, who, like the beloved and love itself, forms part of the real world and is as such subject to the laws of nature, *causality* in particular, that govern this world. In this way the new narratives not only subject the characters in a story to the laws of real life, but also address the reader as an *animal rationale*, a fellow human being with a mind that seeks to *understand* and *explain* the world s/he is living in, asserting his subjective agency in its mental, intellectual aspects (*cognition, reason, critical analysis*).⁴³

genres themselves. While the modern genres try to be innovative but often (have to) 'give in' to the pressure of "resilient" norms, the old established genres, though regularly used to mark resistance against 'Westernisation', often (have to) make compromises in their turn and modernise in at least *some* respects. For the *maqāma*, for instance, a genre that remained strong and popular all over the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Omri describes the process of negotiation as a "partial story of resistance, compromise, and transformation" – Omri 2008, 246. On the changes in the *traditional* genres – all of which are, in my opinion, motivated by a wish of emerging subjectivity to assert and unfold itself –, cf., e.g., Elger, Masarwa, Reichmuth, Junge, etc. (as in n. 15); see also below, n. 55 and 56 (on the tendency to include more 'I' and more 'world', respectively). – However, if traditional elements are retained, this does not necessarily mean that it is done out of reverence for them; writers may also do it in the modus of parody, i.e., complying with norms while at the same time critically subverting them – Omri 2008, 249 – yet another indicator of the subject's intervention into the objective world. – On the challenges of modernity in general as a "trial", cf. El-Ariss 2013).

43 Cf. what has been said above about the '*cogito ergo sum*' component of emerging subjectivity, the new figure of the public intellectual, the longing for plausibility and verisimilitude, etc. Another result of the wish to assert oneself as a *thinking* subject is the prominence of *satire* in this period, both in the press (incl. cartoons) and in literature, where the narrator often marks his self-confident, superior rationality through biting satire. Linguistically, he can continue the old tradition of invective poetry here; but the function of invective has changed now: it no longer serves the purpose of contrastively praising one's tribe or a ruler etc., but mainly underlines the power of the ridiculing subject, i.e., the writer himself.

6.5 Choices to be made (II): The characters

In her brilliant analysis of Nâmık Kemâl's *İntibâh* (1876), Guzine (Güzin) Dino has described in some detail the challenges a modern Turkish writer had to cope with when trying to introduce into literary narrative the realism, rationality, and verisimilitude that fascinated him and his contemporaries so much in Western literature. We have seen above what this meant for the topic(s) that had to be chosen. But it had consequences for the choice of characters, too. For one, there was the idea of representation, of writing about 'the typical'. Moreover, psychological plausibility had to be achieved, especially due to the favourite love topic. This demanded from the writers not only a deep knowledge of the human psyche but also familiarity with techniques of *showing* the characters' traits and their emotions through their actions and in dialogues rather than simply listing and *describing* them, like in a scientific treatise. As in the case of the topic, authors here, too, had *something* to draw upon in the literary heritage, but only little, and available only in different genre contexts. Collections of proverbs (*amthâl*, pl.) and general life maxims could provide insight into patterns of human behaviour; animal fables often highlighted the consequences of certain character features, be they virtues (generosity, honesty, ambition, politeness, modesty, intelligence, understanding, wit, etc.) or vices (arrogance, greed, selfishness, laziness, lack of confidence, etc.); on some of these, extensive treatises or collections of sample episodes, like al-Jāhiz's famous "Book of the Misers" (*Kitāb al-Bukhalā'*), existed and could serve, to a certain extent, as references. So could also *ḥadīth* collections with their compilations about sayings and doings of the Prophet, often under categories of psychological relevance (motivation, intention), like piety, parental love, forbearance, pity, charity, or envy, hatefulness, negligence, disrespect, hubris, etc. However, none of these, like also the character stereotypes of the popular literary heritage, e.g., the *Karagöz* shadow plays, provided examples of *emotional complexity*; human beings did not appear in them as individual subjects but only as one-dimensional types, and their deeds, thoughts and feelings were subjected to moral normativity rather than psychological observation and explanation. Moreover, traditional Islamic 'psychology' showed interest in the self primarily as a site of spiritual perfectibility, where one has to make constant efforts to fight "the self that commands to evil" (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi'l-sū'*), a struggle that, according to a famous saying by the Prophet, is considered more demanding than armed combat and therefore called the Greater Jihad (as opposed to the Lesser Jihad in

physical confrontation with an enemy).⁴⁴ Autobiography in the modern sense had not developed yet,⁴⁵ due to authors' constant anxiety not to appear boastful and to be accused of hubris,⁴⁶ so that the agency of the subject in the world had for a long time remained an aspect to be treated, if ever, with great caution. In addition, "for a sense of the 'inner' self", a premodern reader "would have searched for evidence of intellectual, spiritual, or mystical experience and the cultivated expression of emotion in poetry",⁴⁷ i.e., in aspects that tolerated to be made public, not in the types of intimate, 'private' emotions that the new nineteenth century writers and readers were interested in. Like in Europe (as described by G. Lukács and N. Luhmann), the new genres were a site where the private became public – an effect the emerging middle class was, on the one hand, eager to achieve, due to their wish to assert themselves as a new player in politics and society; on the other hand, it implied the exposition of potentially embarrassing events, feelings, thoughts. Therefore, many early Middle Eastern novels built heavily, as did Nâmik Kemâl's *İntibâh*, on their authors' private life experiences as the richest, most reliable and most authentic source for designing the characters of the protagonists of the new narratives.⁴⁸ In contrast, the characters of other narrative personnel often remained rather schematic, close to the stereotypes of popular story-telling or the ideal types of erotic-mystical romances, etc.

6.6 Choices to be made (III): Space

Similar statements can be made, *mutatis mutandis*, about style and the 'furnishing' of literary space. As for style, we have already come across a telling example above.⁴⁹ Regarding literary space, practically no precedent in classical literature existed that would have described worldly space as an environment that formed the background, or setting, in relation to a subject's agency. Myriad descriptions of places in prose and poetry or travel literature notwithstanding, in premodern Middle Eastern literature space was generally not chosen and

⁴⁴ Article "Nafs" in Ali and Leaman 2008, 87–88.

⁴⁵ ... which is not to say that there hadn't been autobiographical *tendencies* or *elements* also in pre- and early nineteenth century writing (travelogues, *maqāmāt*, etc. – see again n. 15, above).

⁴⁶ Boullata 2001, review of Reynolds, ed. 2001.

⁴⁷ Reynolds, ed. 2001, 245.

⁴⁸ For autobiographical novels and the impact of the private/public dichotomy in society on the type of narrative, cf. my study, Guth 1998.

⁴⁹ See above, note 40.

designed from a holistic perspective, in relation to the actions or events, and usually spatial details did not play a decisive role. Theories of composition like the classical three Aristotelian units (action, time, place) were, as far as I can see, unknown to premodern Middle Eastern literary theory. In non-fictional texts, like travelogues and geographical literature, the description of places was, of course, the writers' major concern, so that modern fiction could draw on this⁵⁰ (perhaps also on the *waṣf* discipline of classical poetry⁵¹). In traditional fiction, however, space had generally been either idealised and symbolically loaded (like the typical 'garden' in Ottoman *divan* poetry, functioning as a marker of the space of the in-group, the Ottoman court elite, as opposed to the outsiders),⁵² or a site of amazing encounters and fantastic curiosities (exotic countries, often home to '*ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt* 'strange creatures', etc.). None of these could provide a writer like Nâmık Kemâl with a model of how to realistically describe the places where his protagonists would fall in love, where they would meet, how the houses in which the characters lived should look like from inside, etc., and how such spaces should be described in relation to the respective events and agents. But it was exactly this, the interaction between acting subjects and the world around them that was at the centre of the modern way of story-telling that the writers aspired to. Where such a modern conception of space had made, and for a long time continued to make, itself felt in *traditional* genres, like travelogues or *maqāmāt*, these texts quite significantly began to take on *novelistic* features and are therefore often classified as 'precursors' of the novel.⁵³

50 Moreover, Ralf Elger has shown that larger parts of medieval travelogues may actually be 'fiction' rather than non-fiction and that 'lying' in such texts probably should not be regarded as malicious distortion of reality but "as a form of art" – see Elger 2010, 72.

51 On *waṣf* and its sub-genres (wine poems, hunting poems, etc.), cf., e.g., Saden 1998.

52 Cf. Andrews and Markoff 1987.

53 In addition to the works mentioned above (see esp. note 15), one may think of al-Shidyāq's *Sāq* (1855, see *ibid.*), 'Alī Mubārak's '*Ālam al-Dīn* (1881/82) or, of course, Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥi's *Ḥadīth 'Isā b. Hishām* (orig. published serialized under the title *Fatra min al-zaman*, 1898 ff.). Sometimes, as in the case of 'Abdallāh Fikrī's *al-Maqāma al-fikriyya al-saniyya fī l-Mamlaka al-bāṭiniyya* (1872), the space 'traveled' to is the inner self, and we encounter a hybrid fusion of travelogue, *maqāma* style, and (quasi-mystical) self-exploration.

6.7 Choices to be made (IV): Temporality and the dynamics of the plot

The new centrality of the subject and its agency in the world was even more decisive in another respect. The emerging group of ‘subjects’ who were eager to assert their agency in politics and society, the new *efendiyya* middle class, or the ‘engineers’, as I like to call them,⁵⁴ not only sought to include ‘more world’⁵⁵ and ‘more I’⁵⁶ in their narratives through the description of realistic settings, characters, and feelings; and realism not only also meant rationalism, verisimilitude, *as-if* representation and, hence, causality. As already mentioned above, it also implied a new approach to *time*:⁵⁷ the world was no static world any longer, but a dynamic world where things changed and could be changed.⁵⁸ Nor was time progressing simply chronologically, with chronology and causality in it being nothing but an illusion while in reality it was God who was recreating the world in each single moment, so that the connection between individual moments was purely contingent on His will and benevolence and the ‘habitual’ logic and causality could always be interrupted (*kharq al-‘āda* ‘rupture with the

54 Due to their scientific approach to society as a ‘social structure’ (*hay’a ijtīmā’iyya*), functioning more or less mechanically and supposedly repairable like a broken car, or curable, like a patient, by a knowledgeable ‘doctor’.

55 The tendency to include ‘more world’ in one’s narratives can, by the way, be observed also in the neo-*maqāma*. While classical *maqāmāt* were about witty rogues, the many modern examples of the genre – “[t]here was hardly any significant writer of talent who did not try his hand at *maqāmāh* writing” (Hafez 1993, 109) – had as their topics, among many other things, the French campaign in Egypt (Ḥasan al-‘Aṭṭār, *Maqāmāt fī dukhūl al-Faransāwiyyīn...*, 1799/1800); the ignorance of the contemporary learned elite (A.F. al-Shidyāq, first *maqāma* in his *al-Sāq ‘alā ’l-sāq*, 1855 – see my study, Guth 2010a / Chapter 8, see n. 15), or a comparison of Cairo under colonial rule to the city as it was under Muḥammad ‘Alī (M. al-Muwayliḥī, *Ḥadīth ‘Īsā b. Hishām*, 1898–1900/1907); Bayram al-Tūnisī’s *maqāmāt* are not only written in the most worldly, ‘down-to-earth’ language, the Cairene vernacular, but also focus on ‘trivialities’ of the contemporary everyday life, like “socks, fish, sausages, telephones, automobiles, and so on” (Omri 2008, 258). – For general overviews, cf., e.g., Hafez 1993, 108–11, and Moosa 1997, 121–55.

56 For earlier attempts to highlight the agency of the subject from within the traditional genres inherited from premodern times, cf. above, note 15.

57 For a general introduction into the matter, cf., e.g., Fludernik 2010.

58 Indications of such a new approach to time may be detected, perhaps, with Victoria Holbrook, as early as in Sheikh Galib’s *Ḥüsn ü ‘Aşq* (Beauty and Love, 1783) which, according to Holbrook, displays a “congeniality between the poet’s embrace of a theory of perpetual creation and the sultan’s [i.e., Selim III’s] concern for progress and reform” – Atis 1996 (review of Holbrook 1994), 161–2.

habitually recurrent') if He so decreed.⁵⁹ Rather, similar to the temporalisation processes described by R. Koselleck as gaining momentum during the European *Sattelzeit*, the new time now had a direction – advancement/progress (*taqaddum*, often combined with a movement upwards: *taraqqī* 'rise, ascent', *nahḍa* 'rising, upswing') towards a better future,⁶⁰ it was moving from a past (of perceived *takhalluf* 'backwardness' and *inḥitāt* 'decay') towards an era of civilisation (*tamaddun*)⁶¹ –, achievable *in time* through the subject's agency (i.e., its causality),⁶² if sometimes with possible setbacks, delays and tragic failures (as natural parts of the very same temporalisation).

The *temporalisation* of the writers' world view can be observed in many fields. For instance, a lexicostatistic study of diachronic change in the frequency of Arabic lexemes revealed, for the late nineteenth / early twentieth century as compared to previous eras, a significant increase in the use of the temporal adverbs *qabla'idhin* 'previously, formerly, once, before that', *ba'da'idhin* 'then, thereafter, thereupon, afterwards', and *'inda'idhin* 'then, at that moment, thereupon'⁶³ – clear evidence of the fact that, obviously, time, especially the temporal relation between past, present, and future, had begun to gain more discursive attention. A similar tendency was noticed in a study on late nineteenth century Arabic dictionaries:⁶⁴ while dictionaries traditionally had a "panchronic"⁶⁵ approach to the vocabulary of the language, ideally compiling *all* the meanings a lexeme ever had taken during the past, conceived as a reservoir of quasi-

59 For the classical Islamic concept of time and causality, cf., e.g., ch. II, "The Completion of Occasionalism in the Teaching of al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935)", in Rudolph 2016, 354–357. – In the Ottoman Empire, Māturīdī theology with its emphasis on human reason and its belief in free (though God-created) will probably facilitated the transition to a modern worldview that focused on the human subject's agency and freedom of choice – thanks again to the reviewer who inspired this remark.

60 For corresponding key concepts in the European *Sattelzeit* ('saddle period'), cf. Koselleck 1985 (orig. 1979). Terminology was often calqued on the corresponding (mostly French) terminology – see the seminal studies by Monteil (1960), Stetkevych (1970) and Versteegh (1997/2001), expanded upon, with a focus on socio-political terminology, by Ayalon (1987), Lewis (1988), and Rebhan (1986); cf. also my own article, Guth 2021b / Chapter 3 (cf. note 62).

61 For "Time and the Structure of 'Civilisation' and 'Progress'", see in particular the subchapter of ch. 2 ("A Conceptual View of Arabic Modernity through Two Key Concepts, 'Civilisation' and 'Progress' (*Tamaddun* and *Taqaddum*)" in Abu-'Uksa 2016, 54–72.

62 For the significance of the grammatical form of conceptual terms, cf. above, Chapter 3 on "Morpho-Semantic Evidence of Emerging Subjectivity in the Language of the Nahḍa" (= Guth 2021b).

63 Zemánek and Milička 2017, 123–128.

64 Zachs and Dror 2020, 15–32.

65 Seidensticker 2008 (pr.)/2011 (online).

timeless semantic possibilities, suddenly, a philologist like Buṭrus al-Bustānī began to leave out, in his *Quṭr al-muḥīṭ* (1869), lexemes and meanings that had become obsolete by his time, a tendency he expanded upon in his monumental “Encyclopedia” (*Dā’irat al-ma’ārif*), apparently in a wish to transform Arabic into a *dynamic*, living language, relevant to the present and future, and to get rid of elements of the past to which the present world had lost connection. Temporalisation is also evident not only from the whole project of a *nahḍa* itself, which, by its very nature, is a project of *perfectibilité* and as such presupposes the possibility of change in time, but also from a genre like *utopia*. A study of some sample texts – appearing for the first time in exactly this period, certainly not by mere coincidence – shows a development of the utopian genre that resembles the one the genre had gone through in Europe: from initially merely spatial utopias (imagining secularised, i.e., worldly, though still unreachable ‘paradises’ located somewhere else, *allotopias*) to subjectivised and temporalised utopias (better worlds, achievable in a concrete future, by human agency).⁶⁶

Actually, however, there is no need to point to the rather specialised genre of utopia, since temporalisation is inherent already in *any* novelistic or dramatic plot. As the premodern Arabic theatrical performances of masked acts, clowning, acrobatics or hobby horse dancing had discontinued the classical Mediterranean Hellenistic tradition that had been present in the Middle East until Late Antiquity, to be replaced by a larger Asian tradition with rather different functions (entertainment, ridicule, acrobatic show-off, etc.),⁶⁷ Aristotle’s drama theory (with its unity of time/plot as a central pillar) was no longer remembered. Nor had ideas that would have been comparable to Aristotle’s played a role in traditional shadow theatre, the Turkish *orta oyunu*, or the Shi’ite passion plays (*ta’ziye*), so that ideas on dramatisation or dynamisation had not developed in these genres either. Similarly, for prose, no theory of time structuring in narrative plots existed. As an element of good entertainment, narrative suspense was of course appreciated; but it was so only intuitively, and suspense was often

⁶⁶ Cf. Hill 2020, and my own article, Guth 2021a (= Chapter 17 of the present volume). – In Europe, the temporalisation of utopia during which previously spatial-static models of a perfect order of things were assigned a place in the future and the *process* of creating such an ideal order came in the focus, was effected from the last third of the 18th century onwards – Voßkamp 1996, 1932. At this stage of the development of the utopian genre, attention shifted from *perfectio* (as in the static, spatial utopias, like Morus’s *Utopia*) to *perfectibilité* (as in Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*) – *ibid.*, 1938. Significantly, *Robinson Crusoe* was among the first and most widely translated texts in the early modern Middle East, cf. Hill 2015.

⁶⁷ See Moreh 1992.

created only by way of accumulation (as in the *Arabian Nights*), i.e., by the insertion of new stories into a loose framework, with the aim of extending the time of narration, not by designing the sequence of the elements of the narrative from a *holistic* perspective in which each individual ‘building brick’ was *necessary* for the story to function *as a coherent whole* (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, catastrophe). Now, however, time had become a *dynamic* time, progressing not as a random sequence of moments and events, but as a causally motivated succession of elements that were interrelated by either necessity or probability.⁶⁸

However, despite this lack, or perhaps rather thanks to it, modernist Middle Eastern writers no doubt enjoyed the challenge of emplotment and being the masters of (narrative) time. It is well safe to assume, with Viktor Shklovsky, that the fictionalisation of the world and its casting in man-made plots with their own man-made causality and ‘subjective’ temporality produced a strong effect of defamiliarisation, “making strange” (*ostranénie*), as Shklovsky calls it;⁶⁹ it suspended traditional ways of looking at the world and drew the readers’ attention to the processes of change, in its many stages, in this way opening their minds for the idea of changeability, reformability itself, the possibility of re-engineering the present and paving the way for a better future – the real-world counterpart of the subject’s agency as imagined in fiction/drama.

As Dino’s sharp analysis of the challenges of designing a plot with regard to “action et structure” (ch. I) makes clear, the *as-if* presentation of the subject’s agency in the world was indeed something quite unfamiliar and strange to pre-modern Middle Eastern literature and had first to be experimented with, and tested out, by the authors, so that in this respect, too, change in literary aesthetics did not come abruptly, but was, and had to be, negotiated slowly, with the effect that ‘modern’ features often overlapped, in one and the same work, with ‘premodern’ ones, or that the works that have come down to us demonstrate their authors’ hesitation between conflicting narrative structures.⁷⁰ It is out of

68 Cf. modern definitions of a ‘plot’ as a cause-and-effect sequence of significant events in a given story – significant because they have important consequences.

69 First developed 1917 in an article entitled “Iskusstvo kak priëm”; English translation: Shklovskij 1965.

70 Cf., e.g., Baber Johansen’s analysis of M. Ḥ. Haykal’s *Zaynab* (1913) which demonstrates a conceptual split running through the Egyptian writer’s (highly autobiographical) novel, owing, with all probability, to a shift in the author’s attitude towards the countryside and the fellahen: while patriotism suggested a positive, rather ‘romantic’ description of life in the countryside, the longing for social progress rather demanded harsh criticism of several traditional, ‘backward’ customs – see Johansen 1967, 22–38.

question, however, that nevertheless, the writing of factualist fiction and the designing of corresponding plots must have granted the writers a high degree of satisfaction, not only because it allowed them to negotiate, in the disguise of symbolic representation, crucial aspects of their own lives and world-views, but also because the many choices they had to make for their plots assured them, in every moment of writing, of their own agency, freedom, and power – as *feeling* subjects; as *reasoning*, critically analysing, intellectual subjects who were finding ‘formulas for the world’; and as subjects who were capable of re-creating the world according to the choices they themselves made: *they* were the engineers who could find the general in the specific and decide who should feature in a symbolic representation of the world; what should happen, and how, and why, and what should be the consequences.⁷¹ Thus, for them, *emplotment* definitively meant experiencing a form of *empowerment*, of superior ‘control’ over this world.

⁷¹ Moretti has a darker view on the overlapping between modern and premodern features. For him, it is essentially a “faultline running between story and discourse, world and worldview: the world goes in the strange direction dictated by an outside power [sc., the colonizer]; the worldview tries to make sense of it, and is thrown off balance all the time” – Moretti 2000, 65.

7 From water-carrying camels to modern storytellers

How *riwāya* came to mean [NOVEL]: a history of an encounter of concepts

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This chapter: The reader of the present volume will perhaps miss the term “emerging subjectivity” in the chapter below. This is due to the fact that it was written (as a chapter in another book) many years before I began to see the phenomena discussed here in the light of “emerging subjectivity” as an overarching principle, or underlying motor. On the surface level, the chapter is therefore nothing more than what it, originally, wanted to be: an in-depth investigation in the conceptional history of the Arabic term that today is equated with the English genre concept “novel” or, even more general, “fiction” : *riwāya*. However, the development described in this study – which is essentially the result of an encounter of an indigenous concept (called “*riwāya*”) and a foreign one (called “novel” in English, “*roman*” in French, etc.), and which shows a semantic shift, via several intermediate stages, from “(mostly oral) transmission” to “novel; fiction” – this development is without doubt analogous to that of *adab* as described in Chapters 4 and 6: it clearly shows a mutual rapprochement of the indigenous and foreign terms – a ‘*riwāyisation*’ of the imported concept and a concomitant ‘*novelisation*’ of the old inherited one. In the chapter, I identified the emerging middle-class, the *efendiyya*, as the agents behind this development, the newly emerged group of secular-educated intellectuals and *literati* (*udabā*) seeking to establish themselves as a social group between the old elites and the masses. From here, however, it is easy to link the described development up to emerging subjectivity, as the *efendiyya* is also the group in which emerging subjectivity as a virulent factor is most prominent and visible, and because also the ‘*novelisation*’ of *riwāya* can easily be seen as a special case of the ‘*literaturisation*’ of *adab*, which we saw was closely linked to the *udabā*, a sub-group of the *efendiyya*. And just as we were able to observe (in Chapter 5) a ‘realist turn’ where *adab* began to emphasize its reality reference, i.e., its relation to the world as the subject’s object, we will be able to observe a similar tendency also in the interplay between *riwāya* and other terms that could have been suitable candidates for rendering

the meaning “novel”, but never ‘made it’, due to the preponderance of the fantastic in their semantics. Thus, we will see that *riwāya* was the term that united in itself most of the key qualities that mattered for (the *efendiyya*’s) emerging subjectivity: reality-reference, emotionalism, and creativity.

It is not surprising, by the way, that much of what is discussed in the chapter below will remind the reader of the two (‘global’ but also Nahḍa-internal) phases mentioned in several chapters above: “Reproductionism” (with its emphasis on the power exerted on the subject by the givens of the world) and “Creativism” (with its underlining of the subject’s capability to transcend the existing order of things).¹

* * *

7.1 Introduction: The history of a concept revisited

New aspects... and earlier research to build on

A reader familiar with research on modern Arabic literature may at first sight be surprised to find here an article to take up a subject which one would think has already been dealt with in almost every introduction to Middle Eastern literary history. Moreover, numerous books have been written about the development of the novelistic genre proper, most of which also dedicate considerable space to the Nahḍa period when, from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, the literary landscape began to change due to the emergence of a new educated elite, the sweeping success of the private printing press and, consequently, the steady growth of a new reading public. Aesthetics began to change, old genres had to compete with new ones, literary paradigms and tastes multiplied, diversified, gradually succeeded and replaced each other. Though probably all of these surveys and studies also drop a word or two about terminology, i.e., about the *words* used in Nahḍa literary discourses about the new genres – before they then go on talking just about “the novel” (resp. French “le roman”, German “der Roman”) – , there are others that display a heightened awareness of the linguistic processes accompanying these developments and at least for more than just a

¹ For “Reproductionism”, see introductions to Chapters 4 and 9 as well as (whole) sub-Chapter 18.3. For “Creativism”, see (briefly) end of introduction to Chapter 1 and (with more details and examples) Chapter 18.3.

short *en passant* remark focus on conceptual change. Among the studies of this kind which also pay attention to the semantic development of the old Arabic word which today signifies the genre concept of [NOVEL], *riwāya*, I should particularly mention Henri Pérès' "Le Roman, le conte et la nouvelle dans la littérature arabe moderne" (1937), Charles Vial's "Contribution à l'étude du roman et de la nouvelle en Égypte, des origines à 1960" (1967), Matti Moosa's *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction* (1970/1997), Roger Allen's "Narrative Genres and Nomenclature: A Comparative Study" (1992), Sabry Hafez's *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse* (1993), my own *Brückenschläge* (2003), as well as the *Histoire de la littérature arabe moderne* (ed. B. Hallaq, 2008); there is also an entry on "*riwāya*" in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., by Stefan Leder (1994).

So many so valuable investigations already being available, why then the present study? The main reason is that none of the above strictly follows chronology and none pays detailed attention to the conceptual changes the term *riwāya* undergoes from its first meeting with western generic concepts such as [NOVEL≡ROMAN], [DRAMA], or [SHORT STORY]² until the consolidation of the meaning it has today. Instead, when talking about "the novel" in the times of the Nahḍa, texts from various stages of this period are often dealt with as if they had appeared more or less simultaneously, and although translational studies like Carol Bardenstein's seminal monograph on Muḥammad 'Uthmān Jalāl (2005) were able to highlight the elements of "indigenous assertion" in the process of "Arabizing and Islamicizing the textual field",³ scientific discourse on the Nahḍa's literary landscape even now still tends to continue to use European terminology ("*novel*", "*roman*", "*Roman*"), thereby suggesting, as was common before Bardenstein, that what was to be found in the "renascent" literary field was, essentially, non-intrinsic, non-indigenous, namely the foreign concepts represented by the English, French, German terms today.⁴ In contrast, and much in the

2 Although it is often difficult to separate the meaning of a concept from the term itself, I will use SMALL CAPS in square brackets [] whenever I want to point to the *signified* whereas I use quotation marks " " to refer to, or focus on, the *signifier* aspect. The operator "≡" in [NOVEL≡ROMAN] is there to indicate the identity of meaning in the English and French concepts, [NOVEL] and [ROMAN].

3 Quotations taken from the book's subtitle resp. the heading of ch. 3, "'Dressing French Texts in Arab Garb': Arabizing and Islamicizing the Textual Field", Bardenstein 2005, 39–98.

4 Studies in Arabic by Arab scholars are no exception in this regard – despite their use of *Arabic* terminology. The meaning of the terms however has changed in the meantime so that, e.g., 'Abd al-Muḥsin Ṭāhā Badr's *Taṭawwūr al-riwāya al-'arabiyya al-ḥadītha fī Miṣr* (1963) is in fact based on a post-Nahḍa understanding of the term, i.e., on "*riwāya*" = [NOVEL], not on everything that the term could mean in the late nineteenth / early twentieth century.

same vein as Carol Bardenstein, volume 1 (focussing on “1850-1950”) of the *Histoire de la littérature arabe moderne* (2008) refrains from using modern western terminology; instead, it describes the Nahḍa as a movement taking place in basically two modes – *iqtibās* and *iḥyāʾ*.⁵ Whereas previous studies, in using western terminology (“novel”, etc.), stressed, if not exclusively presupposed, the first mode, that of loaning, adoption, taking the “fire” (*qabas*) to ignite one’s own thought (*iqtibās*) from somebody else’s (the west’s) ideas, they neglected the other mode, expressed in the continuation of classical terms like *riwāya*, of continuing and “revitalizing” an own, indigenous tradition. We can therefore expect valuable new insights from a closer look at the chronology of the semantic history of the autochthonous term *riwāya*, combined with a more differentiated analysis of the term’s meaning with the help of tools provided by good old Koselleck’ian *Begriffsgeschichte* (history of concepts). Taking account also of the ‘*iḥyāʾ*’ factor’, this chapter will try to describe a *meeting* of concepts, both indigenous and foreign, the process of foreign genres crossing the borders and interacting in the new territory with autochthonous literary culture, hoping to clarify conceptual diffuseness through providing categories of differentiation borrowed from Koselleck, especially the notion of counter-concepts (*Gegenbegriffe*). This in turn will, I hope, also improve our understanding of the sociological ‘meaning’ of many aspects of the changing concepts.⁶

7.2 “*Riwāya*” before and in the early Nahḍa

Before the Nahḍa, as well as in its early stages (first half / mid-nineteenth century), there is no trace yet of the meanings the term was going to take on during the decades to follow. In particular, there is absolutely no indication in the sources that the term could be equated with “novel” or “roman”. Summarizing the use of the term in classical times, Leder gives as the basic meaning of *riwāya* the “transmission of poems, narratives, *ḥadīths*”, the “authorised transmission

5 Wehr/Cowan (1979), s.r. “*q-b-s*”: *iqtibās* = “learning, acquisition (of knowledge); loaning, loan, borrowing (fig.); adoption, taking over, acceptance, adaptation (of a literary text of passage); quotation, citation (of another’s literary work or ideas)”; (s.r. “*ḥ-y-y*”) *iḥyāʾ* = “animation, enlivening; revival, revitalization, revivification; [...]”.

6 The study was inspired by the ideas discussed on the workshop *West Reads East*, held in May 2009 in Berlin, on “Interdependent Hermeneutics of European and Middle Eastern Literatures”. It can also serve as an example of the kind of research done for my project of an etymological-conceptual dictionary of Arabic language and culture (*EDALC*, see <https://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/people/aca/middle-east-studies/tenured/guthst/etymarab.html>).

of books”, or “of a written text” in general, “through oral expression”; he adds that *riwāya* “may sometimes appear synonymous with *ḥikāya*” and that in classical Persian it is even used “in the sense of a *ḥadīth*” (Leder 1994). The fact that the underlying root *r-w-y* is associated with transporting and/or giving water to somebody or with the irrigation of plants, serves a classical dictionary like the *Tāj al-‘arūs* as a plausible etymology for the later metaphorical use: the idea of transmission of a *ḥadīth* or of poetry, al-Zabīdī says, derives from the original use of the verb *rawā* for camels or mules carrying water over a distance (Zabīdī [1774] 2001, vol. 38: s.r. “*r-w-y*”).⁷

The fact that Arab-European contacts intensified after the French invasion of Egypt and that Muḥammad ‘Alī initiated far-reaching reforms and started to build new institutions after western models obviously did not affect for a long time the linguistic domains where *riwāya* was in use. Thus, although Ellious Bocthor *does* include the lemma “roman” in his *Dictionnaire français-arabe* of 1826, he does not yet render it with “*riwāya*” but with “*ḥikāya*”, a term which he probably thought to fit best as an equivalent of “roman” because of the notions of fictionality and fabulosity attached to it (the *roman* itself still being quite a young genre at that time, he felt the need to explain it in brackets as “*récit fictif* [!]” and rendered the pertaining adjective *romanesque* – “*qui tient du roman, fabuleux* [!]” – with the Arabic “*mukharriḥ, bāṭil, ka-‘innahu kidhb*”, i.e., something foolish, futile, invalid, false, “as if it were a lie” – Bocthor 1826). Rifā‘a Rāfi‘ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, else a keen and curious observer of everything French on his study mission to Paris in the years 1826 to 1831, does not say anything about novels in his *Takhliṣ al-ibriz* (1834), which means that the existence of this kind of literature either slipped his attention – which would be rather surprising – or that he simply did not consider it worth mentioning. The only cultural phenomenon he shows an interest in is theatre, which he describes in some detail in the section on “The entertainments of Paris”⁸ (*muntazahāt madīnat Bārīs* = ch. III,7). He does not try, however, to

7 Roger Allen follows this and similar explanations when he states: “The Arabic word *riwāya* is a verbal noun derived from the verbal root *rawā*, an etymon with a very ancient history. The primary meaning of this root is ‘to convey water,’ and it was from that meaning that it came to imply ‘to bear in the memory/know by heart’” (Allen 1992a, 211). – In contrast, Orel and Stolbova think Arabic *rwy* can be associated with Old Egyptian (pyramid texts) *r3* “sentence, speech, language” and propose an Afroasiatic root **rV-/*rVw-* “speak” as the common origin of both OE *r3* and the hypothetical predecessor of Arabic *rwy*, Semitic **rūy-* “to render other person’s words”. As for the semantic complex related to [WATER], they suggest the etymology Arab *riway-* “abundant water” (together with Hebrew *rī* “moistening”) < Semitic **riw-/*riy-* < AfrAs **rūw-* “water”. Orel and Stolbova 1994, #2140 and #2142.

8 Translation follows Ṭaḥṭāwī/Newman 2004.

translate the French words used in this context – “*théâtre*” and “*spectacles*” – into Arabic but rather gives them in transliteration (*al-tiyātr*, *al-sbiktākl*) and confines himself to commenting that this kind of “games” or “plays” (*al-āb*), in which “all kinds of (real) events are staged” (*yul‘ab fihā taqlīd sār mā waqa‘a* – Ṭaḥṭāwī [1834] 1993, 208),⁹ are quite useful because of the moral lessons (*‘ibar*) that can be drawn out of them. So, even if they could seem to be merely light, joking amusement they are in fact to be taken serious (*fī l-ḥaqīqa ... hiya jidd fī šūrat hazl* – Ṭaḥṭāwī [1834] 1993, 208).¹⁰ As we shall see below, a quarter of a century later the standard term for theatrical pieces in Arabic will become “*riwāya*”; al-Ṭaḥṭāwī however does not yet relate the French genre to Arabic “*riwāya*”, and it is therefore highly probable that he does not yet see any connection between classical Arabic [RIWĀYA] and French [THEATRICAL PLAY], although the main argument for introducing theatre (and later also novels) into Arabic in the second half of the century will be this very same usefulness and closeness to reality which the Azhar shaykh already noticed (as we shall soon see below).

The Arabic term “*riwāya*” remains absent also two decades after al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s *Takhlīṣ* when Fāris al-Shidyāq publishes his *al-Sāq ‘alā l-sāq fī-mā huwa l-Fāryāq* (Paris 1855), a hybrid text in which the author displays his familiarity with all kinds of classical genres but at the same time ironically parodies them, thus showing a deep estrangement from them.¹¹ Although the *Sāq* has a number of novelistic elements¹² and although in literary histories it is often classified as a forerunner of the Arabic novel and sometimes actually even termed a “novel” (Al-Bagdadi 1999a, 391), the author himself does neither call it a “*riwāya*” nor use a non-Arabic expression in transliteration but rather speaks, in the subtitle, of *Ayyām wa-shuhūr wa-a‘wām fī ‘ajm al-‘arab wa-l-a‘jām*, adding to this characterisation also one in French: *La vie et les aventures de Fariac: Relation de ses voyages, avec ses observations critiques sur les arabes et sur les autres peuples*. It is the French “relation” that could be interesting for the semantic history of the word “*riwāya*” here. How would al-Shidyāq have rendered it in Arabic? Since he did not, we cannot know. But it is significant in itself that he did not use it but rather preferred to just speak of *ayyām wa-shuhūr wa-a‘wām*... “days, months and years...”.

⁹ On *taqlīd* in this context, cf. Schulze 1994.

¹⁰ On *jidd* and *hazl* cf. Pellat 1957.

¹¹ Cf., among many others, Zakharia 2005 and Guth 2010b.

¹² Rotraud Wielandt characterizes it as “ein Zwischending zwischen Reisebericht, autobiographischem Roman, Maqāmenparodie und lexikalischer Studie” (a blending of travel account, autobiographical novel, *maqāma* parody and lexicological study): Wielandt 1980, 73. The question of genre is explicitly addressed in Peled 1985.

More than a decade after al-Shidyāq's *Sāq*, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's rendering of Fénelon's *Aventures de Télémaque* is published as *Mawāqī' al-aflāk fī waqā'ī' Tilimāk* (1867). It is interesting to observe that the contents of the translation/adaptation is characterized by al-Ṭaḥṭāwī with a word – *waqā'ī'* “events” – pertaining to the very same verb that he used three decades earlier for the description of the theatrical plays he watched in Paris – *waqa'a* “to take place, to happen” –, thus stressing the ‘realism effect’ exerted by French theatre and the novel likewise. However, he does not yet connect this with the old Arabic term “*riwāya*”. Very much in line with this, E. W. Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon*, starting to appear the same year as al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's *Tilimāk*, does not give for “*riwāya*” any other meaning than the classical one: “A relation, or recital, &c. [...]” (vol. iii, s.r. “*r-w-y*”), and Buṭrus al-Bustānī's *Muḥīṭ al-muḥīṭ* of 1870 is even more conservative when it equates “*riwāya*” just with *naql* “transmission” (al-Bustānī 1870, s.r. “*r-w-y*”), in this way not going farther than al-Tahānawī in his *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn* of 1745 (al-Tahānawī [1745] 1862, s.r. “*r-w-y*”). Bocthor's entry, mentioned above, remains unchanged also in the dictionary's forth edition, “*revu et augmenté par A. Caus-sin de Perceval*”, of 1869 (Bocthor 1869, s.v. “*roman*”).

The dictionaries, however, are no longer up to date at that time, the late 1860s. Conservative as dictionaries of Arabic tend to be, they do not yet reflect the semantic changes the term “*riwāya*” had already undergone by the late 1850s, as we shall see now.

7.3 Semantic expansion during the Nahḍa

7.3.1 Reasons

The external reasons that lay behind the semantic expansion of classical terms like “*riwāya*” are well known and widely documented. From the late eighteenth century onwards, political and economic developments initiated the need for reforms, which were carried out all over the nineteenth and early twentieth century in almost all spheres of life and on several levels, resulting in profound cultural as well as social changes. Of the greatest relevance for the field of literature were the following factors:

- the increased and deepened contact with Europe that a group of educated Middle Easterners had on a number of study missions (the first of which headed by al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, see above) to European countries as well as through translations from European languages in a vast number of subjects;
- the establishment and steady expansion of a new secular educational system, parallel to the traditional religious one;

- the gradual replacement of traditional religious institutions with ‘modern’, European-style, secular ones (esp. in the judicial, administrative and educational sectors);
- the concomitant emergence of a new educated class, the secularized *efendiyya*, or the “engineers” as I like to call them because of their pragmatic approach to life and their view of society as a mechanical entity (*al-hay’a al-ijtimā’iyya*); in the Indian context, this group is usually called the “wogs” (an abbreviation for “westernized Oriental gentlemen”), because of their orientation towards Europe;
- the emergence of the printing press and, from the 1860s onwards, of private printing enterprises, conducted mostly by this group;
- the changes that occurred in the genre landscape as a result of the increased influx of European genres (drama and novel, later also short story) as well as the scripturalisation and printing of all kinds of ‘popular’ literature, previously not regarded worth serious attention.

The process taking place in the literary field both as a result and parallel to these developments starts with a change in aesthetic sensibility and, accordingly, also the emergence of new genre concepts. These concepts (and the respective terminology) are met by concepts and terminology coming from outside the Middle East (esp. France, later also England), and in this process both foreign and indigenous terms undergo modifications of meaning (if they survive the competition), and new terms may be coined. Thus, French *romans* and English novels were first read (and translated) without being called “*riwāyāt*”. But when the term “*riwāya*” eventually re-appeared, its meaning had already considerably expanded. In order to linguistically represent the new concept(s) behind these expansions, foreign terminology was only rarely used (if it was, it could have confusing effects, as we shall see below). Instead, the Nahḍa followed the method that had been applied most often in the past in similar cases since the times of the great translation movements of the early Abbasid era, namely that of the integration of new concepts into the indigenous system, i.e., Arabisation (*ta’rīb*), a technique of “indigenous assertion”, as Carol Bardenstein calls it (2005, title and passim). Integration into the indigenous system is however only possible because of overlaps in meaning of the old and the new concepts.

Before we ask *why* it was the classical term “*riwāya*” that was used to represent the new concept let us first look at the new meanings with which it reappears from the 1850s onwards.

7.3.2 The many facets of the modified concept

While dictionaries like Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon* (vol. iii: 1867) and al-Bustānī's *Muḥiṭ al-muḥiṭ* (1870) still perpetuate the classical meanings, the term "*riwāya*" had begun to be used nearly two decades earlier in Syria in order to denote *theatrical pieces* and later also *operas*. Cf. the following examples:

- As early as in 1850, the Syrian Mārūn al-Naqqāsh staged a play he called *Riwāyat Abū l-Ḥasan al-mughaffal*, aw: *Hārūn al-Rashīd*. It was the first of a series of hundreds of plays (labelled "*riwāyāt*") to follow, especially also those penned by Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī (from 1898 onwards).
- In 1875, Salīm Kh. Naqqāsh translated Ghislanzoni's libretto of Verdi's opera *Aida* into Arabic as '*Ā'idah: trājida dhāt 5 fuṣūl*'. By 1914, Jurjī Zaydān still referred to this opera as "a *riwāya*" (Zaydān 1914, iv: 146).
- Around 1880, a certain Muḥammad al-Sikandarī al-Iyādī published a "*tash-khīṣiyya dhāt khamsat fuṣūl*" (5-act play) entitled *Riwāyat Abī l-futūḥ al-Malik al-Nāṣir* which Brockelmann characterizes as belonging "zu den frühesten dramatischen Versuchen" (Brockelmann 1942, *S III*: 266); according to Brockelmann, the extensive dialogues of this *riwāya* show an alteration of prose and longer lyrical passages and are interrupted, every now and then, by song couplets (ibid., 267).
- Starting from 1890, the Egyptian Muḥammad 'Uthmān Jalāl comes out with the first of a series of Arabized versions of plays by Molière (and others) under the title *al-Arba' riwāyāt min nakhb al-tiyātrāt*.
- The tradition initiated in the middle of the nineteenth century is continued with the staging (1920) and the publication (1922/3) of a "*ūbirā buff*" (opera buffa) entitled *Riwāyat al-'Ashara al-ṭayyiba*, a joint effort to which Muḥammad Taymūr contributed the main text, Badī' Khayrī the *zajal* couplets, and Sayyid Darwīsh composed the music (ibid., 272).
- A few years later (1927), *Riwāyat al-Malakayn* appeared, a 3-act opera with the libretto by Mārūn Ghuṣn and the music by Wadī' Ṣabrā. The subtitle specifies this *riwāya* as a "*maghnāt*" (or "*mughannāt*"?) (ibid., 389), i.e., something to be sung (*vgh-n-y*).

The term "*riwāya*" is however not only used for theatrical plays and operas but, from, roughly, the 1880s onwards, also for pieces of *prose narrative*. The first to use it for the new type of 'social romances' that came to be published in newspapers of the Levant seems to have been

- Nu'mān 'Abduh al-Qasāṭīlī with his *Riwāyat Anīs / Anīs wa-Anīsa* of 1881 or 1882.¹³ Others were shortly to follow:
- In 1884, Sa'īd al-Bustānī had presented his humorous description of Egyptian everyday life¹⁴ still not in plain prose, but cast his *Riwāyat Dhāt al-Khidr* into “Kunstpoesie” (Brockelmann (1938), S II: 723) (republished in 1904 with the same title); because of the predominance of the narrative element it is however more counted in line with the previous and the following here.
- Then, starting with *Riwāyat al-Mamlūk al-shārid* in 1891, Jurjī Zaydān applied the term “*riwāya*” also to the type of “historical novels” which he became the most prominent exponent of. The story of “The Fugitive Mamluk” was to be followed, up to the 1920s, by more than twenty similar *Riwāyāt tārikh al-Islām* (stories/novels from the history of Islam).
- In 1899, also one of the first women writers, Zaynab Fawwāz, called a socially critical text *Riwāyat Ḥusn al-‘awāqib*, aw: *Ghādat al-Zāhira* (“The *riwāya* of Good Consequences, or: The Maiden from [the village of] al-Zāhira”) (Booth 2010, 93).
- Time was ripe now, it seems, for a new translation of Fénelon’s *Télémaque*. It was Sa’d Allāh al-Bustānī who produced it around the year 1900 – and labelled it a “*riwāya*”. Thus, while al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s 1867 rendering of the French original spoke of “... *waqā’i’ Tilīmāk*” (what happened to *Télémaque*) in its rhymed title, it now suffices to call the text just *Riwāyat Tilīmāk*.
- al-Bustānī’s *Riwāyat Tilīmāk* was followed in 1902 by another translation/adaptation from a French novel, this time a more recent one: Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s *Paul et Virginie*, rendered by Faraḥ Anṭūn as *Riwāyat Būlus wa-Firjīnī*.
- Other translations of foreign fiction termed “*riwāya*” included 1909 Ma’rūf al-Ruṣāfi’s *Riwāyat al-Ru’yā* (1909, from the Ottoman Turkish writer Nāmık Kemāl’s short prose piece *Rü’yâ* of 1887) as well as J. and Samuel Yanni’s *Riwāyat al-Bā’isīn* (1911/12, from Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*).
- Keeping abreast of (at least some of) the semantic changes which the term “*riwāya*” by then had undergone, Khalil Saadeh’s “new, practical and exhaustive English-Arabic dictionary” of 1911 eventually suggests Arabic “*riwāya*” (or, alternatively, “*qiṣṣa riwā’iyya*”) as a translation of English “novel” (Saadeh/Sa’āda 1911, s.v. “novel”).¹⁵ This is, to all my knowledge,

¹³ Moosa 1997, 430, gives “1881”, Hassan 2007, 200, has “1881/82”.

¹⁴ Pérès 1937, 315, no. 442, characterizes it as a “roman de mœurs égyptiennes”.

¹⁵ Cf. also the equations “novelette” = “*riwāya qaṣīra*”, and “novelist” = “*riwā’ī*” or “*mu’allif riwāyāt*”.

the first instance where a dictionary entry equates the old Arabic word with a new genre.¹⁶ From now on, the new genre – and with it the term “*riwāya*” in its modified, post-classical usage as [NARRATIVE PROSE] – seems to have definitely gained a place in the literary field; the fact that a writer like Maḥmūd Khalīl Rashīd initiated a whole series of *riwāyāt* (the “*Riwayāt of the Philosopher from the Countryside*”, *Riwayāt al-qarawī al-faylasūf*, 1916 ff.)¹⁷ seems to testify to this as well as the increasing number, in general, of series that were exclusively dedicated to popular prose fiction and had the words “*riwāya*”, “*rāwī*” or “*riwāʾī*” in their titles. Here are some examples (unless stated otherwise, all based in Cairo; * = founded in year): *Muntakhabāt al-riwāyāt* (*1894), *Silsilat al-riwāyāt* (*1899, and again 1909-), *Majallat al-riwāyāt al-shahriyya* (*1902), *Silsilat al-riwāyāt al-ʿuthmāniyya* (*1908, Ṭanṭā), *Ḥaḳīqat al-riwāyāt* (*1909), *al-Rāwī* (*1909, Beirut; continued after 1910 in Cairo), *al-Riwayāt al-jadīda* (*1910), *al-Riwayāt al-kubrā* (*1914), *Majallat al-riwāyāt al-muṣawwara* (*1921) and its supplement *al-Nadīm al-riwāʾī* (*1922).¹⁸

In addition to [DRAMA], [OPERA], and [NOVEL], “*riwāya*” was also used, from the late 1890s onwards, though very sporadically only, for what in today’s generic classification would be termed *history*, *biography*, or *autobiography*. There are, for example,

- Nikola Elias’s *Riwayāt Ḥarb al-ʿUthmān maʿa l-Yūnān* (1897) and Muḥammad Tawfīq al-Azhari’s *Riwayāt Anbāʾ al-zamān fī ḥarb al-dawla wa-l-Yūnān* (1898), both telling the history of the Ottoman-Greek war of 1897 (“Thirty Days’ War”) (Brockelmann 1949, II: 483 [634-5]). And there are also a number of

¹⁶ This equation is, however, still not to be taken without caution since Saadeh/Saʿāda’s dictionary is not meant to reflect the actual contemporary use of words but as the author’s own suggestions of Arabic terms for European ones which according to his view had to be Arabized, “with the view of giving the English language a much wider scope in the East than it has hitherto had, and of raising Arabic into the dignity of a scientific language”. And the dictionary’s long subtitle continues to explain: “To attain these two objects, the Author has coined new Arabic terms, in order to give Arabic equivalents for English words in all the departments of science, art and literature, to meet the requirements of the modern students of both languages”.

¹⁷ The first title in the series was *Ḥabāʾil al-shayṭān*, see Brockelmann 1942, S III: 277, and before him Pérès 1937, 327, no. 600.

¹⁸ Pérès 1937, 269–70, based on Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt, *Tārīkh al-ʿadab al-ʿarabī*, 6th edn (Cairo 1935).

- diaries, most often called “*yawmiyyāt*” or “*i’tirāfāt*” (confessions), but sometimes also “*riwāyāt*”.¹⁹ From a today’s perspective, the situation becomes even more complex after c. 1910 when the pieces of literature termed “*riwāya*” begin to include the *results of ‘genre crossings’* that occurred in the process of ‘translating’ European literature into Arabic. For a modern observer who looks at the phenomena a century *post eventum*, the transformation of a prose piece into verses or of a drama into narrative prose seems to be a major generic modification. For the contemporaries, however, it obviously was not a big affair. The fact that, e.g.,
- Wadī‘ al-Khūrī who in 1912 produced a *versified* version of Fénelon’s novel *Télémaque*, chose to call it *Riwāyat Tilimāk*, seems to indicate that he did not really experience a major ‘genre crossing’.
- Nor was it a big affair in 1920 for Muṣṭafā Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī to render a French drama (François Coppée’s *Pour la couronne*) into *narrative prose* without changing the basic generic label. The fact that he allowed himself to “dispose freely” over the original in some places (“*ma’a ba’d taṣarruf*”, as the subtitle has it) made him specify that his “*récit romancé*” (Pères 1937, 293 no. 196) *Riwāyat Fī sabīl al-tāj* contained the quintessence (*khulāṣa*) of an original *riwāya tamthiliyya*, i.e., a theatrical *riwāya*.²⁰ In al-Manfalūṭī’s differentiation, unspectacular as it may seem, between *riwāya* and *riwāya tamthiliyya*, a tendency makes itself felt that can be interpreted as the last-but-one stage in the semantic development of the term “*riwāya*” before its eventual ‘collapse’, the stage in which a classical term into which new meanings have been stuffed over a period of several decades, has become overloaded to the extent that in order to remain functional/meaningful as a generic term at all, it has to be *followed by specifying attributes*. When the language community gets annoyed with attaching attributes to the term in order to allow for terminological precision and diversity, the next and (for then) ‘final’ stage, that of terminological consolidation, will be reached. But let us first have a look at the diversity that was the result of the incorporation of new semantic aspects into the term “*riwāya*”:
- In 1912, Jurjī Zaydān gives his novel *Fatāt al-Qayrawān* the subtitle “*riwāya tārikhiyya gharāmiyya*” (an historical *riwāya* with a love story).
- In 1914, Mārūn al-Naqqāsh calls his 5-act play *al-Bakhīl* (inspired by Molière’s *L’Avare*) a “*riwāya muḍḥika mulahḥana*” (a comical *riwāya* with music).

¹⁹ For the fictional ones among these cf. Häusler 1990.

²⁰ Full title: *Riwāyat Fī sabīl al-tāj, wa-hiya khulāṣat riwāya tamthiliyya bi-hādhā l-ism lil-kātib al-firansī al-shahīr François Coppée ma’a ba’d taṣarruf*.

- When, in 1918, Muḥammad Taymūr's *Riwāyat 'Abd al-Sattār Afandī* is staged, and when it is published in 1922/23, the author specifies this 4-act *riwāya* as a “*kūmidī miṣriyya akhlāqiyya*” (a comedy on Egyptian manners).
- 'Isā 'Ubayd, in the famous “Muqaddima” to his collection of short stories, *Iḥsān Hānim* (1921), a programmatic essay on the project of a ‘national literature’ (*adab qawmī*), refers to his colleague Muḥammad Taymūr's plays as *al-riwāyāt al-qaṣaṣiyya al-marsaḥiyya* (*riwāyāt* that put a story on stage) – ‘Ubayd (1921), ‘*ayn* [= xvi].²¹ Elsewhere in the “Muqaddima”, he talks about “our *riwāyāt*, be they *qaṣaṣiyya* or *marsaḥiyya*” (narratives or put on stage; *ibid.*, *mīm* [= xiii]).
- A year later (1922), the Lebanese Mishal al-Ḥā'ik comes out with the patriotic play *Baṭal Lubnān Yahyā Bek Karam* simply termed a *riwāya tamthiliyya* (a theatrical *riwāya*) in the subtitle (Brockelmann 1942, S III:416).
- Asmā al-Tūbī's *riwāya* about the killing of the Russian tsar and his family (*Riwāyat Maṣra' qayṣar Rūsīyya wa-'ā'ilatih*, 1925) is characterized as “*ma'sāt tārikhiyya adabiyya*” (an edifying [?]²² historical tragedy).
- The *Riwāyat Laylā wa-Samīr* of 1927 by the Iraqi poet Jamīl Ṣidqī al-Zahāwī, the title of which seems to suggest a popular love story, is actually a “drame ottoman constitutionnel”.²³
- Wadī' Abī Fāḍil's *Riwāyat al-Mutawālī al-ṣāliḥ* (1927) is a “*qiṣṣa adabiyya tārikhiyya*” (an edifying [?]²⁴ historical story).
- What Brockelmann (1942), S III: 232, describes as “10 Novellen” has been given the title *al-Riwāyāt al-qiṣaṣiyya* by their author, Aḥmad Mukhtār, in 1927.
- In a last, and late, example, *riwāya* has even three specifying attributes: “*riwāya tamthiliyya tārikhiyya shi'riyya*” (a versified historical theatrical *riwāya*) is the subtitle of Naṣīm Mallūl's *Riwāyat Shahāmat al-'arab*, *aw: al-Samaw'al wa-'mru' al-Qays* (*Riwāya* on the Arabs' noble-mindedness, or: [the two poets] al-Samaw'al and Imru' al-Qays, 1928).

The semantic expansion that the term undergoes during the Nahḍa can be visualized in the following summarizing scheme:

²¹ [= Chapter 12 in the present volume.]

²² For the many possible notions expressed in the concept of *adab*, cf. Guth 2010b.

²³ Brockelmann 1942, S III: 487, is very critical about the piece when he writes: “Das Stück, das sich wie herausgerissene Szenen aus einem sehr schwachen Roman liest, zeigt nirgends auch nur einen Ansatz zu dramatischem Leben. Die Charakteristik der Personen bleibt ganz blass.”

²⁴ See fn. 22 above.

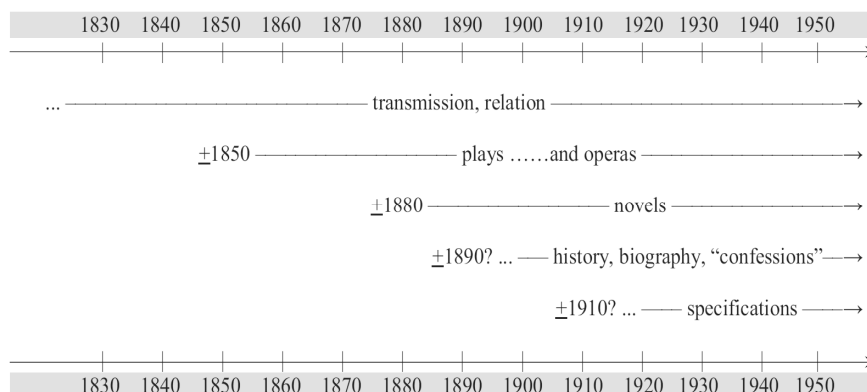


Fig. 1: Semantic expansion of "riwāya" during the Nahḍa

7.4 *Riwāya* in a changing genre landscape: Competitors in the field

7.4.1 The place of [RĪWĀYA] in the system of genres

Before we turn to the question what could be the common denominator in all this variety we first have to give attention to 'the other side of the coin', i.e., to the rest of the system of genres which "*riwāya*" is only one aspect of, though a very important one. This is necessary because in a generic system, each single genre – a concept – receives its specific identity only in relation to the others. The semantic expansion of the term "*riwāya*" described above must therefore have had an effect on the remaining genre landscape and/or in its turn been the result of changes that had occurred there. We will therefore have to look both at European terms used, if ever, simultaneously with "*riwāya*" as well as at other indigenous terms against which "*riwāya*" probably was profiled and which in their turn were profiled against "*riwāya*" and the European terms.

But is this feasible? The advent of the printing press and the establishment of private publishing enterprises in the second half of the nineteenth century flooded the market with such an immense amount of new texts of various types

that the terminological variety is almost overwhelming, as is evident from a quick glance at Fig. 2 (in which I only gathered the most current types/terms).²⁵

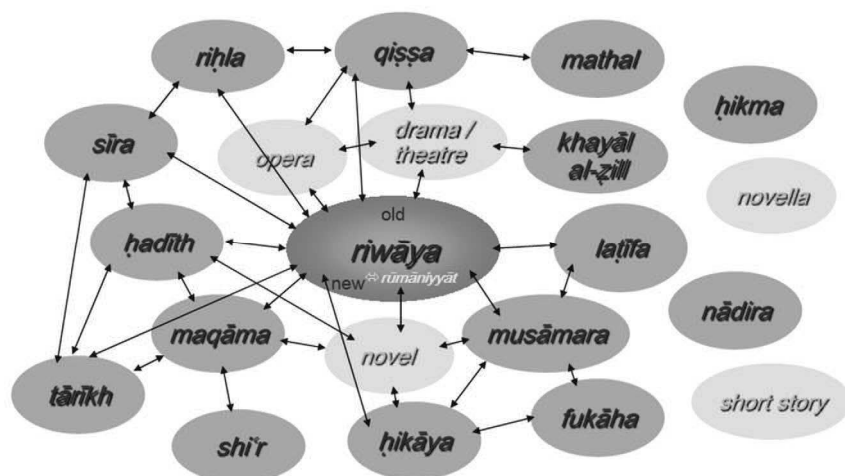


Fig. 2: Semantic relations among most current generic terms during the Nahḍa

Having to profile the meaning of *riwāya* against this huge variety of terms, will we have to check them all then, and also the ways in which they are related among each other? An almost unachievable task, given what Charles Pellat rightly remarked already in 1966 in his entry on “Ḥikāya” in *EF* after an overview of early Islamic narrative genres:

In fact the diversity of the words used in the first centuries of Islam would seem to indicate that tales, legends and stories of all kinds were in vogue and that they were distinguished from one another with great precision; on the other hand, each of them through the centuries has undergone an evolution distinctive enough to merit a special article.

(Pellat 1966)

Our task however is not as difficult to fulfil as it may seem at first sight. Luckily, there has come upon us an article from the pen of a most attentive but also very critical observer of his times, the *shaykh* Muḥammad ‘Abduḥ, and this document

²⁵ For a detailed survey, with further references, cf. my *Brückenschläge* = Guth 2003b, esp. 169–73, 180–85, and 192–94, as well as ‘Abdel-Meguid 1994.

will allow us to take a short-cut.²⁶ In 1881 – that is, roughly about the time when “*riwāya*”, according to the above scheme (Fig. 1), began to include texts which from our modern perspective usually are called “novels” – ‘Abduh registers, in a rough survey of the book market prompted by the appearance of the Arabic translation of a French novel,²⁷ the contemporary reading public’s increased fascination with three types of books: a) works on history (*tārīkh*), b) moralist stories (*al-akhlāq al-‘aqliyya*), and c) a genre he calls “*rūmāniyyāt*” (‘Abduh 1881, 154), a term obviously coined from French *roman* (or *romance*?).²⁸ Interestingly enough, this category for him does not only comprise that newly translated novel(la) as well as Fénelon’s *Télémaque* but also Ibn al-Muqaffa’s (d. 755 or 756) *Kalīla wa-Dimna*²⁹ and two titles by Ibn ‘Arabshāh (1392-1450), *Fākihāt al-khulafā’* and *Marzubānnāma*.³⁰ This means that while the classical term “*riwāya*” is beginning to incorporate modern-type novels, a modern generic term loaned from French is made to include texts from the classical *adab* tradition – there is definitely movement in the genre landscape!

²⁶ The article has been noticed by others before. But its richness in interesting observations has, in my opinion, not yet been exploited sufficiently. Cf. Pérès 1937, 267, 270; Brugman 1984, 205; Cachia 1990, 35; Allen 1992a, 212 (fn. 11); Hafez 1993, 110.

²⁷ Pierre Zaccone’s (1817–1895) feuilleton novel/novelette *Une Vengeance anglaise* (1878), translated into Arabic as *al-Intiqām* by Salīm al-Naqqāsh and Adīb Ishāq in 1880. According to Pérès, this short novel was “le premier roman français dont l’influence se [fais]ait réellement sentir sur le public lettré de l’Égypte” – Pérès 1937, 267; cf. also *ibid.*, 308, no. 354.

²⁸ The appearance of the French word in Arabic seems to coincide with its emergence in (Ottoman) Turkish. While one looks in vain for the Turkish term *rōmān* in Aḥmed Vefik Paşa’s Ottoman dictionary, *Lehce-i ‘Osmānī*, of 1876, it is only four years later, in 1880, that the prolific writer Aḥmed Midḥat uses *rōmān* as if it was a long-established term. Cf. my *Brückenschläge* = Guth 2003b, 193 (with fn. 119 and 120) and 283 (with fn. 490).

²⁹ Originally “an Indian mirror for princes” that was “translated from Sanskrit into Pahlavi and thence into Arabic” – Brockelmann 1993, 694.

³⁰ *Fākihāt al-khulafā’ wa-mufākahāt al-ẓurafā’* (Fruits of the Caliphs and Jokes of the Witty, 1448): edited as *Liber Arabicus sive Fructus Imperatorum et Jocatio ingeniosorum* by Gustav Freytag, Bonn 1832, 1852. *Marzubānnāma*: Brockelmann, in the first edn of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (see previous fn.), mentions this title under the heading “Imitations of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*”. Ibn ‘Arabshāh’s Arabic version is probably based on a rendering into Ottoman Turkish (or Persian?) by a certain al-Warāwīnī, which was “composed between 607 and 633 (1210–1225)” and “enjoyed great[.] popularity.” al-Warāwīnī’s text seems to be in turn the translation of a “mirror for princes in which historic anecdotes are mingled with beast-fables for the edification of the reader” which “was composed about the end of the fourth century A.H. by the prince of Ṭabaristān, Ispahbadh Marzubān in the Persian dialect of his land” but has itself “not survived” (op.cit. in previous fn.: 698). Cf. also Walther 2004, 187–88.

An indication of this movement is also the clear overlapping of ‘Abduh’s classification of “*rūmāniyyāt*” with the characteristics of texts that otherwise, as we have seen, are termed “*riwāyāt*”. It is true that, according to the *shaykh*, “*rūmāniyyāt*” are not identical with history (*tārikh*) and ethics (*akhlāq*), two terms which a few years later appear as possible specifications also of “*riwāya*” (cf. *r. tārikhiyya* and *r. akhlāqiyya*, mentioned above); but they can already be seen together with *tārikh* and *akhlāq* in one group, the popular “*kutub adabiyya*” (education and formation of the self, *Bildung*), because all three aim at “enlightening the minds and refining the manners/morals” (*tanwīr al-afkār wa-tahdhīb al-akhlāq*). Significantly, ‘Abduh does not explicitly mention for his “*rūmāniyyāt*” a number of qualities that have become optional for the new “*riwāya*”, such as being performed on stage (*riwāya tamthiliyya / marsahiyya*); with musical elements or completely as an opera (*riwāya mulaḥḥana*), or without music at all; in plain narrative prose (*riwāya qishaṣiyya*), with some verses, or wholly versified (*riwāya shi’riyya*); comical or tragical (*riwāya muḍḥika – kūmidī*, resp. *ma’sāt – trājidī*); and mostly including a love story (*riwāya gharāmiyya*). What is important for him is that the *rūmāniyyāt*, like the books on history and ethics, are “created to serve noble purposes” (*mukhtara’a li-maqṣad jalīl*), among which he mentions the instruction in *adab*, that is, in a general humanism,³¹ which includes the “call for virtuous actions and the deterrence from vices” (*al-ḥathth ‘alā l-faḍā’il wa-l-tanfīr min al-radḥā’il*), but may also be accomplished via informing the readership about the present and past “conditions” of one’s own and other “nations” (*bayān aḥwāl al-umam*). In this way, ‘Abduh’s *rūmāniyyāt* converge with the nationalist and ethical/edificational *riwāyāt* (cf. the sub-genres *r. miṣriyya* and *r. adabiyya* listed above).

It is, therefore, rather safe to assume that the ever-advancing intersection of western and eastern cultures and literary traditions during the nineteenth century caused the conceptual boundaries of both terms, *roman* and *riwāya*, to become increasingly blurred in the Arabic-speaking world, producing for some time a mixed concept. This mixed concept – we may call it [RŪMĀNIYYĀT≡RIWĀYĀT] – could be referred to by contemporaries as either “*rūmāniyyāt*” or “*riwāyāt*” or with other terms that had already been somehow ‘absorbed’ in the meantime by “*riwāya*” as a superordinate term. It is this blurring of boundaries that made it possible for a writer like Jamīl Mikhā’il (Nakhlah) Mudawwar to translate, for instance, in 1884, Alain-René Lesage’s (1668–1747) picaresque novel *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* (4 vols., 1715–35) under the decorative rhyming title of *Tasliyat al-*

31 For the equation of “*adab*” and “humanism”, cf. my etymologico-conceptual study “Politeness, Höflichkeit, ‘*adab*’, i.e., Guth 2010b.

ikhwān fī waqāʿi Jilblās Santilān (The Entertainment of Our [lit. the] Brothers, or: What happened to Gil Blas of Santillane), in this way letting the reader expect a piece in the manner of classical *adab*, probably in rhymed prose (*sajʿ*), but in reality presenting a text in plain, rather inornate, unembellished prose that, according to the hero's own words in an introductory paragraph, tells the "history of my life" (Lesage: *l'histoire de ma vie*, Mudawwar: *al-ḥawādith allatī waqaʿat li* ³²), marking the – fictitious, but pretendedly real – account, for the Arab reader, as belonging to the category of autobiography, i.e., history (cf. the Arabic words *ḥawādith*, sg. *ḥāditha* "event", and *waqaʿa* "to take place, happen").

Muḥammad ʿAbduh's survey is indeed worth a closer look because it allows us to find out something about the place the new mixed genre of [RŪMĀNIYYĀT≡RIWĀYĀT], according to him, had in the literary landscape, as well as about the categories that served a contemporary critic like him to demarcate genres against each other. In this system, the three most popular types of books just mentioned (*tārīkh*, *akhlāq*, *rūmāniyyāt*) together form only *one* of five major categories, that of *adab* (cf. ʿAbduh 1881, 154–5). Thus, the *kutub adabiyya* are set apart from four other categories, and if we consider these to be, in a way, their counter-concepts,³³ a clearer idea of what the new genre was may emerge *ex negativo*, i.e., some features of the [RŪMĀNIYYĀT≡RIWĀYĀT] can be inferred from what they obviously are *not*. As *kutub adabiyya*, the *rūmāniyyāt* are distinguished from

(1) *al-kutub al-naqliyya al-dīniyya* "the books of the transmission of religious tradition (s)". Although these too are described as widespread, both in printed and handcopied form, the *rūmāniyyāt* have nothing to do with them. They *rūmāniyyāt* have to be thought of, then, as something more worldly, perhaps even secular.

(2) As *kutub adabiyya*, the *rūmāniyyāt* are also different from *al-kutub al-ʿaqliyya al-ḥikamiyya*,³⁴ which means that their primary feature is *not* the concern with the big philosophical questions of our existence (*al-ḥaqāʾiq al-wujūdiyya*) addressed by these books. The *kutub ʿaqliyya ḥikamiyya* are characterized as being very rare, there exist only a few prints, some handwritten copies, and some foreign editions. Given the fact that they also are quite expensive, they

³² Beginning of ch. "Gil Blas au lecteur", <<http://abu.cnam.fr/cgi-bin/go?gilblas1>> (accessed Feb. 10, 2011), or Vreeland 1900, 1, resp. Mudawwar 1884, 1.

³³ The idea of "counter-concepts" (Gegenbegriffe) as co-constituting the semantics of a given concept is central to Koselleckian *Begriffsgeschichte*. Cf., e.g., Andersen 2003, 38–43.

³⁴ I am not sure if الحكمة should be read as *al-ḥikmiyya* (nisba of *ḥikma*, lexicalised as "gnomic, aphoristic, expressing maxims" – Wehr/Cowan 1979, 229, or, as preferred here, as *al-ḥikamiyya* (nisba of the plural of *ḥikma*, *ḥikam* "wisdoms, sagacity"). A reading as *al-ḥukmiyya* "legal" can be excluded because of ʿAbduh's further explanation, see above.

are bought and read only by “less than a few” people. For the *kutub adabiyya* and, among them, the *rūmāniyyāt*, this probably means that they are less elitist because they do not so much rely on logic, the intellect, rationality, and wisdom, but rather allow more ‘trivial’ things and emotion to play a greater role.

(3) Our *rūmāniyyāt* are however also demarcated against *kutub al-akādhīb al-ṣirfa* “the books of pure lies”. With this term, ‘Abduh mainly denotes invented history (*tārīkh aqwām ‘alā ghayr al-wāqī* “peoples’ history not based on – i.e., devoid of – reality”) which, he deplores, often also tends to be written in a bad, ungrammatical language (*bi-‘ibāra sakhifa mukhilla bi-qawānīn al-lughā*). As examples he mentions, among others, the popular epics (*siyar*, “Volksromane”) of *Abū Zayd al-Hilālī* and *al-Zāhir Baybars*. *Rūmāniyyāt* and other *adab* books, we may infer, have a closer relation to reality and a substantial connection to real history, are written in a ‘higher’, not all too popular, or at least a correct language, and even though they too have quite a broad readership, they are probably not as ubiquitous on the market as the “mendacious books” about which ‘Abduh says that they are “more than many”, that there exist many printings and that they even get quickly reprinted as soon as they are sold out.

(4) From the moralist perspective ‘Abduh takes, another category of books is as dangerous for the youth and therefore as condemnable as the *kutub al-akādhīb al-ṣirfa*, namely those of “superstitious beliefs”, *kutub al-khurāfāt*. Under this heading, the *shaykh* gives a long list of works, among which figure, in the first place, books that “try to establish a relation between man and evil spirits”, or ghosts, try to explain the weather as the result of the activity of irrational forces, and so on. According to ‘Abduh, these books, too, are deplorably popular and, like the *kutub al-akādhīb al-ṣirfa*, can be printed and reprinted very easily because they neither touch politics nor religious issues. The conclusion we have to draw from this characterisation for the *rūmāniyyāt* is similar to the previous one: the *rūmāniyyāt* must be something much more rational and down-to-earth than the works of this category, and they are by far not as dangerous for the youth as these.

(5) Within the category of *adab* books itself, the *rūmāniyyāt* form a sub-category on equal terms with history (*tārīkh*) and ethics (*akhlāq*). As already mentioned above, all three have the same aim of *tanwīr al-afkār wa-tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (“enlightening the minds and refining the manners/morals”), but they are distinct sub-categories nevertheless. ‘Abduh remains silent about the exact differences between them, but given the fact that the *rūmāniyyāt* can contain elements, or may also have the qualities, of both history and ethics, we may well infer that *tārīkh* is used only for pure history and *akhlāq* only for moralist stories in a strict,

narrow sense, while the *rūmāniyyāt* can be history and/or moral refinement *mixed with an ‘element x’*.

Thus, the criteria according to which genres (“types of books”, in ‘Abduh’s words) are demarcated here against each other are:

- hand-written or printed vs. oral (an implicit distinction, since ‘Abduh talks about books only)
- having a narrow circle/elite of readers vs. wide distribution, popularity
- religious vs. non-religious
- rational, intellectual vs. less demanding with respect to rational/intellectual capacities
- written in correct language vs. not caring about corrupted (“bad”) Arabic
- referring to reality (factual) vs. (purely) fantastic, imagined, invented
- useful (historical knowledge, moral refinement) vs. dangerous for the youth (esp. because of superstitious beliefs).

Before we continue trying to assign the new concept of [RŪMĀNIYYĀT≡RIWĀYĀT] its place in the contemporary genre landscape, it may be useful to ask, in the light of the semantic development of “*riwāya*” described in 7.3. above, what are the common denominators of the classical term “*riwāya*” and the term as it is used from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. In this way we can expect to find additional criteria that can supplement the results of the analysis of ‘Abduh’s survey and will thus give further hints as to the question of the nature and function of the new genre as well as make the merging of classical Arabic and new European genre concepts into the [RŪMĀNIYYĀT≡RIWĀYĀT] genre more plausible.

7.4.2 Why is the new concept called “*riwāya*”? Common denominators in [RIWĀYA]^{OLD} and [RIWĀYA]^{NEW}

Roger Allen already notes that “*riwāya*” in origin implied *orality*, and he adds that this is “something which may perhaps make the adoption of the word in the earliest periods of the development of modern Arabic drama [...] more than a little appropriate” (Allen 1992a, 209). However, it was probably not only orality in itself, i.e.,

the fact that in theatre, too, a memorized text was “*transmitted [orally], related, recited, or rehearsed*”,³⁵ which let the old term seem appropriate to incorporate the new notion of theatre productions. For associated with orality proper were still other aspects which equally matched the new genre(s), such as *naturalness* (as opposed to the artificiality of written texts) and *reliability* (oral transmission was traditionally held in high esteem,³⁶ and although, e.g., the Prophet’s tradition can be found in books, all *ḥadīth* collections imitate, in their *isnāds*, a situation of basically oral transmission).³⁷ Through the close association with *isnād* and *ḥadīth*, “*riwāya*” further participated in the prestige of *learnedness* and a highly respected *science*.³⁸ Together with this prestige, the new “*riwāya*” could hence inherit the old term’s aura of *verifiability*, *trustworthiness*, and *respectability*.

On the other hand, the texts that were transmitted orally through *riwāya*, from an early time on used to be *written* texts³⁹ and as such enjoyed a *higher prestige* than other cultural products, expressed through the medium of language, that were not deemed worth to be written down, esp. the ‘trivialities’ of the cultures of the masses. Not only orality, therefore, was an important aspect in [RIWĀYA]^{OLD} as well as in [RIWĀYA]^{NEW}, but rather the terms’ oscillation between the oral *and* the written, its bridging between the two.

35 My wording here reflects the *r-w-y* entry in Lane 1867, vol. iii:1194 (italics as well as square brackets are Lane’s).

36 Cf. Leder 1994 who points to “the great value attached to oral testimony, which is hard to understand for outsiders and which is most characteristic of Islamic scholarship”.

37 The meaning of reliability attached to “*riwāya*” did of course not remain restricted to early theatrical *riwāyāt* but could easily be inherited by later mutations, particularly historical *riwāyāt*. For several decades, their writers do not become tired of insisting on the reliability, despite the light, entertaining mode of narration, of the historical facts presented in their texts. Thus, Jamil N. Mudawwar, for instance, shows himself eager, as late as in the second, 1905 edition of his *Ḥaḍārāt al-Islām fī Bayt al-Salām*, to assure the reader that he “integrated into the book the *isnād* references/details (lit. the witnesses) as a proof of what is written in the travelers’ reports” (*wa-qad akhadhtu fī l-kitāb shawāhid al-isnād lil-dalāla ‘alā mā waqa’a fī ḥadīth al-raḥḥāla*).

38 Cf., e.g., al-Tahānawī’s entry on *riwāya* in his *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn* (first draft finished in 1745), which clearly treats *ḥadīth* as a science and *riwāya* as an integral part of a logically structured system when he says: “*wa-l-muḥaddithūn qassamū al-riwāya ilā aqsām fa-qālū...*” (the *ḥadīth* scholars divided *riwāya* into several groups/categories [lit. sections, parts], namely...) – al-Tahānawī 1745/1862), s.r. “*r-w-y*”.

39 Cf. Leder 1994: “*Riwāya* generally means transmission through the spoken word, including purely oral retelling as well as recitation from notes and books. With the use of writing for the preservation of knowledge, *riwāya* came to mean, in practice, the transmission of a written text through oral expression.”

Equally important besides orality and the mediation between written and oral was certainly also the element of *narrativity* that was already inherent in [RIWĀYA]^{OLD}.⁴⁰ While the aspect of transmission of accounts or reports facilitated the term's use, at a later stage, for all kinds of narratives, not the least because of its closeness to *popular story-telling*, in the early phase of its semantic expansion (when it became used for theatre productions) it was obviously more the aspect of *performativity* accompanying oral transmissions that likened and linked the new genre to earlier tradition.

Furthermore, classical "*riwāya*" not only carried the connotation of Prophetic tradition and history but was also associated with poetry, a *rāwī* often being one who memorized and then recited a poet's verses.⁴¹ The aspect of *high quality literature* attached to [RIWĀYA]^{OLD} through the link to poetry was certainly of great help for the advocates of the genres covered by the expanded [RIWĀYA]^{NEW} to assure them some prestige in the field.

Not so much the association with poetry but certainly that with *ḥadīth* added yet another aspect: it brought "*riwāya*" in close vicinity to *history*⁴² and, hence, also to *reality*, *realism*, *facts* and *factualism*⁴³ (or at least the illusion thereof), as well as *sobriety*, key-values of the new educated elite. In this way, an air of *seriousness* and *down-to-earthness* could be bestowed also upon the new genres, and it facilitated their modelling against the traditionally low-esteemed fantastic genres ('Abduh's *khurāfāt* and *akādhīb* books) as their counter-concepts.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ This aspect is still preserved even in modern media Arabic where one can find expressions like *riwāyāt al-bintāghūn al-mufabraka* "the Pentagon's fabricated reports" or *taḍārabat al-riwāyāt ḥawla l-ma'raka allatī...* "there were contradictory accounts about the battle which..."

⁴¹ This is the *rāwī* whom Jacobi 1994 deals with (exclusively) in her entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn.

⁴² This is the reason why also histories of the Greek-Ottoman war could be labelled "*riwāyat...*" (cf. 7.3.2 above, p. 165).

⁴³ Cf. entry "*riwāya*" in de Biberstein-Kazimirski (1875), s.v. *rwya*: "1. Récit, relation (d'un fait, d'une parole) [...]" (my italics, SG).

⁴⁴ Cf., e.g., Muḥammad L. Gum'a who, according to Brugman 1984, 209, "was far ahead of his time, [...] in his coherent defence of literary realism in the introduction to the novel *Fī wādī l-humūm* (1905), where he declared to have given up fantasy (*khayāl*) for reality (*ḥaqīqah*) and to prefer the realism (*ḥaqīqīyah*) of Zola and Balzac to the romanticism (*khayālīyah*) of Scott and Dumas."

7.4.3 The “middle genre”: an attempt at definition

We have now hopefully collected enough criteria to dare an attempt at a more detailed and differentiated description of what the new, modified *riwāya* concept ([RĪWĀYA]^{NEW}), sometimes labelled “*rūmāniyyāt*”, sometimes “*riwāyāt*”, actually was.

All the types of *riwāya* mentioned above in section 7.3. – be they translations/adaptations from a foreign language or purely indigenous creations, be they theatrical pieces, verse epics, plain prose narratives, or literarised history – had an edifying as well as an entertaining component and were considered to be at the same time useful and pleasant. In this respect, they perfectly matched the esthetic criteria of classical *adab* (which were more or less identical with the Horatian imperatives of “*prodesse et delectare*”), which justified, even for someone like Muḥammad ‘Abduh, their grouping among the *kutub adabiyya* and, thus, the ‘higher’ types of literature. It is not quite clear why ‘Abduh did not use the term *riwāyāt* but preferred the French loanword *rūmāniyyāt*, applying it even to pieces of classical Arabic *adab*; as a *shaykh* with a traditional Azhar background, he may however have felt that the new genre was different from what *he* until then had understood under “*riwāya*” – the transmission of *ḥadīth* (and perhaps other historical information) and poetry on the one hand, or the popular story-telling (*riwāya* in the sense of *ḥikāya*), on the other hand – , and therefore chose a new term that did not carry a ‘burden of the past’ and in this way made clear that the change that had occurred in the genre landscape in his opinion called for a new terminology and modified classification, a terminology and classification that affected the labelling and grouping of some classical genres, too. Another explanation for ‘Abduh’s choice of “*rūmāniyyāt*” instead of “*riwāyāt*” may have been the fact that in 1881, the time he wrote his overview, “*riwāya*” was already in use with a post-classical meaning – theatrical pieces – , and he sensed that for texts like the translation of Zaccane’s *La vengeance anglaise*⁴⁵ which, as a feuilleton novel/novelette, was still a rather new phenomenon then, a distinct label was needed. A third reason for the *sheikh*’s avoidance of the term “*riwāya*” and his preferring the French expression may have been his wish to find a generic term that neither had the respectability and seriousness of the science of *ḥadīth* nor the ‘lightness’ and low respectability of all too popular story-telling about it but, rather, was something in between.

For those coming after ‘Abduh, this ‘*in-betweenness*’ must however have seemed inherent in the term “*riwāya*” already, for this is the term that eventually

45 Cf. note 27 above.

asserted itself, the French-inspired coining “*rūmāniyyāt*”, to all my knowledge, never ever appearing again. At the same time, the preference of an ancient Arabic term meant that the new phenomena had become indigenized, in this way completing the process of which ‘Abduh’s filing of the “*rūmāniyyāt*” among the *adab* books, together with *Télémaque* and *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, was an earlier indication, i.e., the process of the new genres’ further integration into the landscape of traditional Arabic genres.

While ‘Abduh probably wished to see the use of the term “*riwāya*” restricted to more serious and/or prestigious types of writings (Prophetic tradition, history, poetry), most contemporaries seem to have preferred “*riwāya*” because it, on the one hand, *had* this air of learned erudition about it, but on the other still smacked less elitist and more popular than another candidate on the list of possible terms from the tradition that overlapped with the new genres and competed with “*riwāya*”: *ḥadīth*, a term most often used at that time by adherents of neoclassicism for the so-called neo-*maqāma*. As Brugman notes about the novel, one variation of what we called [RŪMĀNIYYĀT=RIWĀYĀT], it developed “along with and often as a reaction to the neo-*maqāma*” (Brugman 1984, 205), i.e., it competed with texts that likewise counted among *adab*, enjoyed the prestige of classical, ‘high’ literature, told entertaining as well as edifying stories, were equally undergoing a generic evolution and had proven to have a high integrative potential, texts which their authors called “*ḥadīth*...”⁴⁶ because they followed the classical tradition in opening with a (fictitious) *isnād* (the formula “ḥaddathanī X ‘an Y ... qāl: ...” introducing the chain of transmitters), a device that not only linked their texts to the *maqāma* tradition but to the more ‘serious’ historical genres (in the same way in which the term “*riwāya*” ‘dignified’ the newly emerging genres by its traditional connection with *isnād* and, consequently, with history, the science of ‘real facts’). Compared to the neo-*maqāmāt*, which we therefore have to consider as a counter-concept of our [RŪMĀNIYYĀT=RIWĀYĀT], the latter were less traditional then, less elitist, less learned, in a way more *sha‘bī*, though simultaneously aspiring at the same high ends.

“*Riwaya*” occupies a similar intermediate position also in a number of (inter-related) other respects. There is, e.g., the aspect of the new genres, in spite of participating in ‘high’ culture, being affordable also for the less well-off. In his *‘Alam al-Dīn* (1881), for instance, ‘Alī Mubārak lets an Englishman explain a theatre – i.e., one of those institutions where “*riwāyāt*” were staged! – to an Arab who until then was ignorant of this type of useful, edifying entertainment, with

⁴⁶ The most famous among these neo-*maqāmāt* is the – comparatively late – *Ḥadīth ‘Isā b. Hishām* by Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī (serialized in 1898, as a book in 1907).

the words: “*fa-yadkhul al-ghaniyy wa-l-faqīr wa-l-‘azīm wa-l-ḥaqīr*” (so, both rich and poor, mighty and miserable are admitted – Mubārak 1881, ii:402), a fact that obviously deserved explicit mentioning.

The fact that theatrical “*riwāyāt*” used to be in the *dialect* while other types were written in elaborate *fuṣḥā*, further reinforced the [RŪMĀNIYYĀT≡RIWĀYĀT]’s oscillation, already observed above, between the written and the oral and in this way its intermediate position between ‘high’ and ‘low’, elite and popular culture.

In addition, the [RŪMĀNIYYĀT≡RIWĀYĀT] were building bridges between life and art, reality and literature. The close correspondence between literature and the world ‘outside’, the texts’ ‘realism’, i.e., their referentiality, was something new to Arabic literature (and to Middle Eastern literary aesthetics in general), but from now on a “particular reading contract” was established according to which “the recourse to fiction is nothing more than an artifice used to disclose a ‘reality’ the other instruments of social knowledge cannot or do not want to represent.”⁴⁷ This notion was present from the early stages of the evolution of the new genre when theatre stagings would be watched as “science-based examples (or: parables) in accordance with historical events and the vicissitudes of fate”, to quote once more the description of theatres in ‘Alī Mubārak’s *‘Ālam al-Dīn*.⁴⁸ The same work praised the reference, in Europe, to “a specific real incident or a known event” even in songs and operas, the aim of singing and staging being “to remember” and “re-enact” (lit., repeat) historical events that were deemed appropriate for this purpose.⁴⁹ An additional virtue of these realistic, science-supported lessons was that they could help to promote “the nation’s progress and civilisation”.⁵⁰ The genre’s usefulness in the context of nation-building, its down-to-earthness and anchoring in real life were of course values especially appreciated by the new educated elite, the *afandiyya*, or ‘engineers’. It was only natural for the new social group who had to find their place in society somewhere between the old elite and the masses, to propagate a genre that, with its focus on real life and the world, could serve as a counter-concept of all those genres of traditional literature, associated with the religious and literary establishment, that in many

⁴⁷ Jacquemond 2004, 46. Jacquemond holds that this contract was operative “since al-Muwaylihi” only, but I think he will forgive me to have implicitly extended the scope of his statement since there is clear evidence of literary ‘realism’ and referentialism as early as in the plays of the 1850s and the social romances of the 1870s in the Levant.

⁴⁸ *amthāl ‘ilmiyya ‘alā ḥasab al-ḥawādith al-tārīkhiyya wa-l-taqallubāt al-dahriyya* – Mubārak 1881, ii: 406.

⁴⁹ *fa-hiya fī l-ghālib ‘ibāra ‘an wāqī’a makhṣūṣa wa-ḥāditha ma’lūma yurād tadhkārūhā wajustajād takrārūhā* – ibid.

⁵⁰ *taqaddum al-umma wa-tamaddunihā* – ibid.

people's eyes indulged in theological hair-splitting, juridical nit-picking, and an oversophisticated, overrhethorized literary mannerism, all of which seemed to have lost contact to what was really happening in the country and whose detachment from real life was felt to be an obstacle on the way to necessary reforms.

The new elite's strategy to displace the old one by appropriating some of the latter's 'high' values while simultaneously seeking support from the masses by 'lowering' aesthetical standards and 'popularizing' the field of literature has yet a number of other aspects. Some of them can be subsumed under the heading 'Between "seriousness" and "lightness"'. To start with, the [RŪMĀNIYYĀT≡RIWĀYĀT] are always eager to contribute to the noble task of *tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, "the cultivation of the morals" of society, but they achieve their goal in an entertaining and, thanks to their down-to-earthness, easily understandable, practically oriented way that is much less elitist than the detailed sophisticated *akhlāq* treatises mentioned by 'Abduh as a sub-group of *adab* books and labelled "aqliyya", i.e., demanding intellectual, philosophical efforts.

If this attitude could be summarized as 'Ethics? Yes, of course – but let it be entertaining, please!', entertainment in itself, on the other hand, had always to be controlled in order to prevent that the genre would be accused of being *too* popular. Thus, [RŪMĀNIYYĀT≡RIWĀYĀT] like, e.g., the early socially critical stories by Salīm al-Bustānī (1870s), when serialized in the magazine *al-Jinān*, were intentionally placed in the *fukāhiyyāt* (humour, funny tales) section, despite their serious moralist content. But this exposed the texts to the risk of being dragged close to the *kidhb-khurāfa-siḥr* categories, so vehemently condemned by the literary establishment. In the fourth edition (1869) of Bocthor's French–Arabic dictionary, for instance, the French "*roman*" is still not rendered with "*riwāya*" but, like in the first edition four decades earlier (1826), with "*ḥikāya*" (popular story), and the adjective "*romanesque*" is not only explained as "qui tient du roman" but also as "*fabuleux*" and rendered in Arabic as *mukharriḥ – bāṭil – ka-annahū kidhb* ("foolish, fabulous – futile, false – as if it were a lie" – Bocthor 1869, iv:s.v.)! And Brugman rightly states that the genre often "found little appreciation" because it

assumed the function of the stories (*aḥādīth*) recited by professional story-tellers. These performed especially for the lower classes and their tales were not considered as belonging to the realm of literature, which had always been an upper-class affair in the Arab world.

(Brugman 1984, 206)

Authors, translators/adaptors, and editors of [RŪMĀNIYYĀT≡RIWĀYĀT] therefore were always eager to assure their readers that what they held in their hands was by no means pure entertainment but definitely something more serious. Thus, Jurjī Zaydān, in the preface to his *Asīr al-mutamahdī* (The Prisoner of the *Mahdī*

Pretender, 1892), conceded that the events which the story would be about were indeed framed by a love story; but he was quick to add, “everything that I will mention about them [sc. the Sudanese] is true/real and in no way less reliable than books on history.”⁵¹ And he repeats more or less the same argument still two decades later, in the preface to *Fatāt al-Qayrawān* (The Girl from Kairouan, 1912), when he admits that there are elements of fiction in this historical *riwāya* but in the same breath underlines that historical facts have been truthfully observed.⁵²

Much of the *riwāyāt*’s ill repute stemmed from the beginnings of theatre in the Arab world. Although the educative value of the stage was always an essential that went without saying, for over half a century many critics nevertheless thought of them as something dubious or frivolous, just because the plays were in the vernacular (*‘āmmiyya*), the ‘low’ language of the masses (*‘amma*), and they were considered ‘light’ entertainment also because they were either comedies or melodramas and used to be accompanied by music. In the course of time, however, also this changed, and with it the medium’s (and the *riwāya* genre’s) reputation, especially so after George Abyaḍ had “broken away from the musically-inclined Ḥijāzī’s troupe” and gone on “to present serious drama and tragedies on stage.”⁵³ Thanks to his efforts, a writer like Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm, by the early 1920s, experienced Abyaḍ’s theatrical *riwāyāt* as “the closest paradigm of high culture at that time”; clearly, it had become a very “serious” genre now.⁵⁴

Before that, and in the non-theatrical *riwāyāt*, the genre’s “seriousness” and “respectability” was underlined mostly linguistically – through the use of *fuṣṣḥā* – and, as we have seen, topically – through a focus either on local social problems⁵⁵ or on historical themes,⁵⁶ on biography or autobiography,⁵⁷ or travel accounts,⁵⁸ i.e., through the texts’ reference to “reality”.

51 *kullu mā sa-adhkuru ‘anhum ḥaqīqī yurkan ilayh wa-yu’tamad ‘alayh i’timādan lā yaqillu ‘an i’timād kutub al-tārikh bi-shay’* – Zaydān 1892, 4.

52 *ma’a taḥarrī l-ḥaqīqa wa-l-muḥāfaẓa ‘alā l-waqā’i’ al-tārikhiyya* – Zaydān 1912, 4.

53 Amin 2010, 103.

54 Ibid., echoing al-Ḥakīm’s own wording.

55 Most of the plays had this aspect (cf., e.g., Bardenstein 2005), but there were also the ‘social romances’ of S. al-Bustānī or Nu’mān al-Qasāṭilī (cf. Moosa 1997, chs. 7 & 8, *passim*), or a novel like J. Zaydān’s *Jihād al-muḥibbīn* (1893).

56 See, first and foremost, Jurjī Zaydān’s work.

57 Cf., e.g., the translation of Lesage’s *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* (see above, p. 172 with fn. 32). Many later examples of what is usually termed the beginnings of the artistic novel, like Ibrāhīm ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Māzinī’s *Riwāyat Ibrāhīm al-kātib* (written 1925–31), Ṭahā Ḥusayn’s *al-Ayyām* (1929f.) and *Adīb* (1935), or Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm’s *Yawmiyyāt nā’ib fi l-aryāf* (1937) and *Uṣfūr min al-sharq* (1938), have a strong autobiographical component.

58 Cf. already al-Bustānī’s rendering of *Robinson Crusoe* as *K. at-Tuḥfa al-bustāniyya fi l-asfār*

Back to the other side of the balances of the new “middle genre” again, a means to enrich the ‘dry facts’ of social criticism, historical and travel accounts was to season them with big emotions. Emotion had become a value in itself by that time as a major marker of the new middle class’s identity and moral superiority: it replaced the ‘nobility’ of descent and (traditional) higher education of the old elite with the ‘nobility of the feeling hearts’ of the new one. This is one of the major reasons for the translation of so many foreign love stories and the printing of a great number of popular stories featuring a loving couple, as well as for the Nahḍa’s affinity to tragedy, moving scenes, enthusiasm and pathos, but also to adventure, tension, and suspense. The intermediate position between sobriety and emotion is also reflected linguistically in the choice of an ‘in-between’ language where plain prose is enriched through rhetoricizing elements...⁵⁹

... but, of course, only up to a degree where literary devices were not too intellectually demanding! In fact, most of the rhetoricisation was achieved with the help of poetically-sounding standard formulæ. The risk of being accused of searched difficulty and over-rhetoricisation – for the new middle class a characteristic of the writing of the old elite – was too high and had to be avoided as much as the risk of being too popular. In the course of time, activity, flexibility, liveliness, and naturalness became more and more imperative for the [RŪMĀ-NIYYĀT=RIWĀYĀT], particularly so when the national movement and the call for a national literature (*adab qawmī*) gained momentum.⁶⁰

On the other hand, the loss of aesthetical prestige on account of the implementation of a simplified, less ‘beautiful’ language was somehow compensated for, from the beginnings of the [RIWĀYA]^{NEW} genre, by a higher complexity of the plots of the stories told. Narratives became longer, more complex, but at the same time also more coherent than classical texts that mostly had an anecdotal, mono-linear episodic structure, theatrical pieces lost the improvised character of popular street theatre or the traditional shadow plays, a “red thread” led through the events that had a planned beginning, thickening of the knot, and well-calculated culmination.⁶¹ Perhaps, this ‘geometrical approach’ of the *riwāya* authors to

al-kurūziyya (1861).

⁵⁹ Cf. my essay on the period’s “flood of tears”: Guth 1997b [= Chapter 11 in the present volume]. For more details, and parallels in Turkish, cf. Guth 2003b, §§ 15, 33, 34, 44k, 47, 53, 79a, 81a, 92c.

⁶⁰ Thus, ‘Īsā ‘Ubayd, in the programmatic “Muqaddima” to *Iḥsān Ḥānīm*, could acknowledge Muḥammad Taymūr’s use of the dialect in his theatrical pieces as a legitimate means to make the plays “free from *takalluf* and *jumūd*” – ‘Ubayd (1921), ‘*ayn* [= xvi] [cf. Chapter 12, below].

⁶¹ Cf. Maḥmūd Taymūr’s characterisation of the narrative framework of Jurjī Zaydān’s historical *riwāyāt* as a phenomenon of innovation and modernity because it builds on *ḥādītha*, *uqda* and *nihāya* – Taymūr 1970, 18.

the whole of a literary edifice, its ‘architecture’ and overall structure, rather than the old aesthetics’ focus on the embellishment of smaller units (a syntactic unit, a verse, ...⁶²), can be seen as a parallel of the way the new educated elite of rationalist ‘planners’, sober ‘engineers’ and ‘social engineers’ viewed the society they felt obliged and sent to ‘repair’ and ‘reform’.

Most probably, it was precisely the new concept’s intermediate position described so far, its having ‘a little bit of everything’, that made it a winner in the competition against other candidates. The first and second type of books from Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s list – religious tradition and philosophical speculation and reasoning about the world – as well as the books on history and ethics were serious literature, but lacked the element of light entertaining. Too popular genres like the folk epics and superstitious writings were to be discarded because they lacked respectability. In contrast, the new [RŪMĀNIYYĀT=RIWĀYĀT] could incorporate all these elements without any of them ever getting the upper hand, there was always something to counterbalance a potential predominance of one feature over the other. The intermediateness and absorptive capacity guaranteed it its superiority: compared to [RŪMĀNIYYĀT=RIWĀYĀT], genres like *riḥla* (travel account), *sīra* (biography; popular epic), *tārikh* (history), or *shi‘r* (poetry) had a much narrower scope, while the [RŪMĀNIYYĀT=RIWĀYĀT] could incorporate elements of all of these, sometimes even in one and the same “*riwāya*”; genres like *mathal* (instructive and/or edifying examples), *ḥikma* (aphorisms), *nādira* and *laṭīfa* (anecdotes) were too short, too pointed, had too few characters and too little complexity to offer, while “*riwāya*” could integrate a great number of them at a time in one text; both *musāmara* (lit., pleasant entertainment) and *fukāha* (humorous story) were too exclusively entertaining as to represent a serious competitor. And even among the remaining four terms – *qiṣṣa*, *ḥikāya*, *ḥadīth*, and *maqāma* – none was balanced enough, in the long run, to beat the [RŪMĀNIYYĀT=RIWĀYĀT]’s integrative power that could build a bridge between the elite and the people, i.e., the power most needed in the process of nation building.

It is true that the new genre was often also labelled “*qiṣṣa*”, but it seems that this term, at the end of the day, lacked “*riwāya*”’s notion of factualism – it could be ‘pure’ fiction –, and it had perhaps also a slightly too moralist touch.⁶³

⁶² Cf., for instance, Wolfart Heinrichs’ ideas on the ‘molecularity’ of classical Arabic poetry (sketched, e.g., in Heinrichs 1974 or Reinert’s illuminating description of the *conchetto* style in classical Islamic literatures (Reinert 1990).

⁶³ This assumption is based on the Ottoman evidence where “*kiṣṣa*”, according to Sagaster 2011, 34, is “das Wort für einen kurzen Prosatext mit lehrhaftem Charakter” – cf., e.g., a title like *Qiṣṣadan ḥiṣṣe* “The Moral (to be drawn) from the Story” given by the prolific Aḥmed Miḍḥat (1844–1912) to a collection of edifying anecdotes he started to write in 1870. If Pellat and Vial in

“*Ḥikāya*”, in its turn, had a high absorptive potential, too; but although its closeness to ‘natural’, popular story-telling was a feature that was much welcomed – sometimes even huge, multi-volume projects like ‘Alī Mubārak’s encyclopaedic *‘Alam al-Dīn* (1884) were presented as a “*ḥikāya*” by their authors – , in the long run it was obviously experienced as *too* popular. “*Ḥadīth*” and “*maqāma*”, on the other hand, seem to have been finally discarded because they smacked too much of the traditional elite, be it the religious or the literary one.⁶⁴

As becomes clear from the preceding analysis, “*riwāya*” during the Nahḍa and the period of nation building is probably less of a literally distinct generic term than a term with a primarily *social* connotation. It allows for a large variety of ‘fillings’ of the ‘variable’ whose common denominator it is to hold a balance between characteristics that have traditionally been associated with the two major groups of society, the elite and the masses (cf. Fig. 3). As the new secular educated elite is trying to find a place for themselves somewhere *between* the traditional elites and the lower strata (cf. arrows), with the aim to replace the former, or at least confine them to a less influential, insignificant position, while at the same time establishing themselves as the moral (and later also political) leaders of the latter, the [RUMĀNIYYĀT≡RIWĀYĀT] genre generates individual texts in a process of constant negotiation of the types and ratio of ingredients, always eager, however, to mix elements from both spheres – from the one the contemporary literary system classified as ‘high’ *and* the one classified as ‘low’ culture (Fig. 4) – in a way that holds the balance between both (cf. arrows), incorporating larger sectors of both in order to achieve a new blend – the blend corresponding to the new concept of the [NATION].⁶⁵

their “*kiṣṣa*” entries in the 2nd edition of the *Encyclopædia of Islām* are right, the Arabic term “*qiṣṣa*” (from which the Ottoman is, of course, a loan via Persian) seems to have lost, over the centuries, its earlier religious and edifying connotations, so that the Ottoman evidence would not support my argument. In this case, “*riwāya*” may have superseded over “*qiṣṣa*” because of the former’s length and, therefore, ‘gravity’, and the latter’s too close association with popular story-telling.

⁶⁴ For an example of a ‘modernised’ *maqāma*, see below, Chapter 8.

⁶⁵ [For the ‘*adab*-tation’ of French *patrie*, cf. above, Chapter 5.]

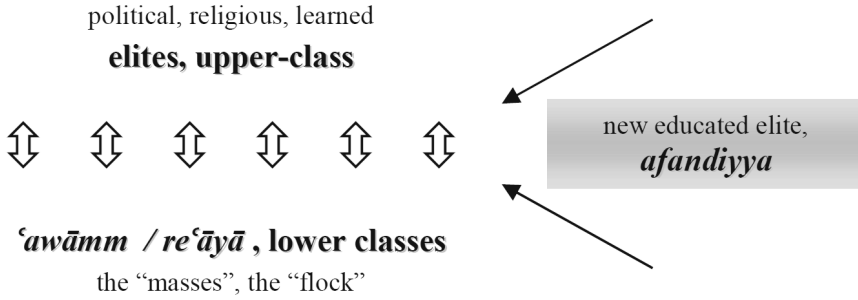


Fig. 3: Social hierarchy during the Nahḍa

genre social group	linguistic level	poetry	rhetorized / rhymed prose	prose
educated elite <i>khāṣṣa</i>	written language (high variety) <i>fushā</i> / ‘ <i>osmānīca</i>	<i>qaṣīdah</i> („ode“)	<i>maqāmah</i>	<i>adab</i> witty, jocular distraction, useful (=edifying) entertainment, polite teaching of (moral) lessons
good, high brow literature	scriptuality	<i>ġazel</i> / <i>gha- zal</i>	‘high’ epics (often <i>meṣnevī</i> / <i>maṣnavī</i>)	incl. travelogues, historical writings (also biography), philosophy, religion
↑↑ ↑↑	↑↑ ↑↑	↑↑ ↑↑	↑↑ ↑↑	↑↑ ↑↑ ↑↑
the masses <i>‘āmma</i> / <i>re ‘āyā</i>	people’s spoken language (low variety) <i>‘āmmīyya</i> / ‘ <i>kaba</i> ’ <i>Türkçe</i>	poetry in the vernacular	popular (‘folk’) epics	popular stories (e.g. <i>1001 Nights</i>), romances etc.
inferior, of minor value	orality	metrics: <i>zajal</i> , <i>hece</i> , ...	<i>siyar sha ‘biyyah</i> , <i>destan/dastân</i>	told by professional story-tellers <i>ḥakawātī</i> / <i>meddāḥ</i> / <i>naqqāl</i>

Fig. 4: Premodern literary fields and genre hierarchy in the Middle East. Arrows indicate the intermediate position taken by the new genres during the Nahḍa

7.5 Semantic consolidation: “*riwāya*” is reduced to [NOVEL]

As we have seen above, the meaning of the term “*riwāya*” is closely linked to the social position of the new educated elite: while they are establishing themselves as a middle class in society, [RIWĀYA]^{NEW} negotiates its place as a middle genre in the literary field. Our survey stopped at a time, however, when “*riwāya*” did not

yet signify the concept [NOVEL] as clearly and unequivocally as it does today.⁶⁶ When did this consolidation happen? And how was it achieved?

These questions will need a study in its own right. I would assume that the eventual breakthrough of the genre, its assertion as one of the leading genres (if not *the* leading genre) in the literary field, its emancipation from the need to court, and borrow from, traditional ‘high’ as well as ‘low’ genres in order to incorporate them, and its stripping off these elements and mutating into what is usually called the ‘mature novel’ in histories of modern Arabic literature, i.e., [RIWĀYA]^{NEW}’s increasing assimilation to the western concept of [NOVEL] – this process was probably the result of two main factors: a) the increasingly dominant role of the new secular educated elite in Middle Eastern societies and their eventual takeover, b) the process of a steadily advancing globalisation, the Middle East’s integration into ‘the world’ and, consequently, also the literary forms’ ever-growing communication with the system of ‘world literature’.

For the time being, we can only state that the process of consolidation was rather longsome. Although there were, for instance, already hundreds of examples of narrative texts around in the second decade of the twentieth century that called themselves “*riwāya*”, Jubrān Khalil Jubrān, himself a major representative of modern texts of the [RIWĀYA]^{NEW} type, “suggesting [in 1917] to the editor of the review *Hilāl* the holding of a competition for the best story – to promote a genre that ha[d] proved its worth in Europe – use[d] the term *ḥikāya* to describe the genre” (Vial 1980), not “*riwāya*” or “*qiṣṣa*”. On the other hand, “*riwāya*” remained a common term for theatrical productions, while “*marsaḥiyya*” (today: “*masraḥiyya*”) was still not yet in wide use as late as in the 1920s (Amin 2010, 103). In the 1930–40s, “numerous literary reviews sprang up and flourished, dedicating a great deal of space to fictional writing, both translated and original” and (together with “*qiṣṣa*”) “*riwāyah* became [a] common feature[.] in the titles of many of these magazines” (Hafez 2007, 58), cf., e.g., *al-Riwāya* (founded 1937).

Nevertheless, in 1931 ‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād called Shawqī’s play on Cambyes *Riwāyat* [!] *Qambiz*; in 1933, Nasīb ‘Arīḍa (New York) published a 4-act drama under the title *Riwāyat* [!] *al-Shā’ir ‘Abd al-Salām b. Raghbān*; and in 1937, a certain Wadī‘ Abī Fāḍil came out with a play, too – *Riwāyat* [!] *Tammūz wa-Ba’la* –, but specified this “*riwāya*” as a “national (or: nationalistic, patriotic?) *riwāya* for the

⁶⁶ I am speaking of the use of the term for a literary genre/concept here only. “*riwāya*” has, of course, retained its older non-specific meaning of “(oral) transmission; report, account” in modern standard Arabic. In their *Dictionary of Arabic Literary & Linguistic Terms*, Wahba and al-Muhandis give a general definition first – “version” –, but then clearly state: “*al-riwāya fī l-adab* [=] Novel” (1979, 103, s.v. *riwāya*).

stage in verses” (*r. shi‘riyya tamthīliyya waṭaniyya*)⁶⁷ – a clear indication of the fact that “*riwāya*” then still meant that ‘open’, unspecified middle genre that had emerged during the Nahḍa, not yet, as it would today, necessarily a novel. This is also clear from the fact that Maḥmūd Taymūr, in calling his longer narrative *al-Aṭlāl* (1934) an “Egyptian *riwāya*”, had to further specify it as a “narrative” one (*qaṣaṣiyya*) (Pérès 1937, 333, no. 673). The examples from the 1930s are the latest known to me in which “*riwāya*”, used in a discourse on literature, does not yet signify [NOVEL]. In contrast, the latest use of another term than “*riwāya*” for a text that is usually considered to be a novel, is Maḥmūd Taymūr’s labelling, in 1970, Haykal’s *Zaynab* a “*qiṣṣa*” (Taymūr 1970, 39).

Given the fact that the processes mentioned above as two possible reasons for the consolidation of “*riwāya*” as [NOVEL] did not take place over night but over several decades, there are certainly a number of events and factors that contributed to a gradual semantic change. We may think of the political take-over of the secular nationalists (cf., e.g., the 1919 uprising in Egypt) as further backing [RIWĀYA]^{NEW} and strengthening its position in the field; of the call of the advocates of *adab qawmī* for an improvement of the artistic qualities of “national literature”, i.e., their insisting on literature as an *art* of writing, as something reversing the earlier inclusion of ‘low’ and ‘simple’ elements and therefore beginning to upgrade the genre while simultaneously narrowing its social points of reference [cf. below, Chapter 12]; of the preponderance of the short story in the writings of the adherents of “national literature” as a factor that contributed to a sharpening of the profiles, by way of contrast, of longer as opposed to shorter genres, a differentiation that had to be followed, in the course of time, by a sharpening of genre terminology, all the more so since, for the short story, terms like *qiṣṣa*, *qiṣṣa qaṣīra*, or *uqṣūṣa* tended to become fairly unequivocal; we could however also think of the newly established language academies as executing a certain normative influence on genre terminology; of the way the ‘great old men’ of the generation of the ‘pioneers’ – Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, ‘Abbās M. al-‘Aqqād, Maḥmūd Taymūr, Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī, ... – used a term in their critical writings as setting examples that modified a certain semantic value of a generic term, or cemented it for a certain time; or of Nagīb Maḥfūz’s novels, all of which appeared as “*riwāyāt*”, as setting a powerful standard for what from then on should be considered a “*riwāya*”. For all of these possible factors, I still do not have textual evidence yet and am therefore unable to present concrete examples of ‘missing links’ that would document the transition from the semantic breadth of the concept of [RŪMĀNIYYĀT≡RIWĀYĀT] and that of the most recent meaning of “*riwāya*”, i.e., the

67 Brockelmann 1942, S III: 417, characterises it as “mythologisch-symbolisches Spiel” that puts “die patriotischen Hoffnungen seiner Landsleute” on stage.

concept of [NOVEL]. There is, however, at least one dated record that can serve as evidence for a beginning terminological differentiation: In 1942, in the preface to his *Pygmalion*, Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm declares that a number of his theatrical pieces were not written to be staged and could therefore not be considered as “*masraḥiyyāt*”; they were meant to be read, and this is why they are rather pure “*riwāyāt*”.

7.6 Recent developments: postmodern genre-crossings

After modern Arabic literature had, as it seems, further brought its forms in line with the ‘global standards’ and the term “*riwāya*” had seized, in contemporary literary discourse, to mean anything else but [NOVEL], new developments became possible. The first of these to happen were perhaps the coinings made from a combination of “*riwāya*” and “*masraḥiyya*” for novels in which dialogue prevailed, or theatrical pieces with a narrative character. This seems to have happened not long after Nagīb Maḥfūz had published a collection of texts that he himself called “*ḥiwāriyyāt*” (from *ḥiwār* “dialogue”), “q.m.” (i.e., “*qiṣṣa masraḥiyya*”), or “*uqṣūṣa masraḥiyya*”. All texts in this collection – *Taḥt al-mizalla* – were written between October and December 1967, under the direct impression of the catastrophe of the June War. Although not composed to be staged but to be read, these narratives contained so much dialogue that the remaining narrative elements often could just as well be classified as stage instructions in a play (cf. Fähdrieh 1991, 120). This was, with all probability, the starting point after which also terms like “*masrawiyya*” or “*misrawāya*” were coined for what was experienced as a composite genre. Had the terms “*riwāya*” and “*masraḥiyya*” not yet consolidated their meanings as [NOVEL] and [DRAMA, PLAY] at that time, the composita would have been meaningless.

In most recent years, “*riwāya*” seems to have again followed global developments and readjusted its semantic range so as to conform to these. Just as the English word “novel” tends to become more or less synonymous with “fiction” in general, the Arabic title of what is now usually referred to as the Arabic “Booker Prize”, *al-Jāʾiza al-ʿālamīyya lil-riwāya al-ʿarabiyya* (literally, “the World Prize for the Arabic *riwāya*”), has been rendered into English as “International Prize for Arabic Fiction”!⁶⁸



الجائزة العالمية للرواية العربية
INTERNATIONAL PRIZE FOR ARABIC FICTION

⁶⁸ Cf. the prize’s website, <http://www.arabicfiction.org/>. – The IPAF is granted to Arab novelists since 2007 in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Thus, the history of the term “*riwāya*”, like the history of modern Arabic literature in general, can serve as a paradigm of how Arabs conceived of themselves and their relation to the world and what they experienced as global standards or norms. Until now, this history has generally been a history of a ‘Third World’ region and of ‘Third World’ literary genres adapting to ‘First World’ norms/standards (though trying to retain, and indeed retaining, an identity of their own), i.e., a monodirectional movement from what was felt to be ‘inferior’ or ‘underdeveloped’ ‘up’ to the level of what had the prestige of the ‘more advanced’ and therefore ‘superior’ culture. The direction of this process of adaption reflects, of course, global power relations. As a consequence, neither had ‘First World’ terminology to adapt to Arab(ic) realities nor have ‘First World’ literatures ever felt a need to ‘reach’ standards that would have been inherent in Arab(ic) concepts.⁶⁹ When Nagīb Maḥfūẓ was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1988, many critics in the ‘First World’ had not even heard of this writer yet, and Arabic novels still have difficulties to find a place in the canon of ‘world literature’ although excellent translations meanwhile are available in many languages and although it is certainly not only Maḥfūẓ “who, through works rich in nuance – now clear-sightedly realistic, now evocatively ambiguous – has formed an Arabian narrative art that applies to all mankind”.⁷⁰ It seems, then, that, for Western-centrist tastes, this “Arabian narrative art” has still retained too much of the [RŪMĀNIYYĀT≡RIWĀYĀT] and is obviously still somehow different from the western [NOVEL] concept! With the globalisation of the world increasing since, say, the past three decades [sc., after ca. 1980], and that is, first and foremost, with its increasing interconnectedness and rhizome-like, web-like structure, traditional genre definitions have of course been called into question and often been considerably modified. In his *What Is World Literature?* of 2003, for instance, David Damrosch did away with an evaluative use of the term “world literature” and replaced earlier catego-

69 I am neither counting here the cases – that remained without long-lasting and/or wide-ranging consequences anyway – of some Romantics imitating ‘oriental’ forms in their own poetry, nor those of Arab and western scholars trying to ‘prove’ that novel, short story and theatre were not new to Arabic literature but had in fact ancestors in the classical tradition (for the theatre, the *Karagöz* shadow plays served as a main argument; for the novel, it was, in the first place, Ibn Ṭufayl’s “philosophical romance” (Kruk 1987, 357) *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, a “philosophical treatise in a charming literary form” (Inati 1998)). The rather temporary phenomenon started, probably, with the ‘Third World’ movements, lasted for perhaps a decade or two, and ended with postmodernism.

70 “The Nobel Prize in Literature 1988”, http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1988/index.html (retrieved 24Feb2011).

ries such as ‘literary quality’ or ‘aesthetic value’ with the plain figures of production, publication and circulation. In addition, harsh criticism has been raised against an until then still largely European canon, and the calls to overcome this Eurocentrism have been loud and powerful. Yet, there are also voices who maintain that, due to their peculiar history, Middle Eastern novels (or should we say: *riwāyāt* ?) are indeed essentially different from Western novels,⁷¹ the international recognition of Nagīb Maḥfūz or the Turk Orhan Pamuk as important contributors to world literature notwithstanding.

71 Both Richard Jacquemond and Samah Selim, to mention only two proponents of this tendency, have elaborated on the connection between literature and society that seems to be much closer in the Middle East than it now tends to be in the West. See Jacquemond 2003 and Selim 2004.

Part IV: **The emerging subject seeking to assert itself**

8 Even in a *maqāma*!

The shift of focus from “trickster” to “narrating subject” in
Fāris al-Shidyāq’s *al-Sāq ‘alā l-sāq* (1855)

First published in *Many Ways of Speaking about the Self: Middle Eastern
Ego Documents in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish (14th–20th century)*, ed.
R. Elger and Y. Köse (Wiesbaden 2010), 145–160

This chapter was first published in a volume on “ego documents” that assembled contributions to an earlier workshop on the same topic.¹ The term “ego documents” covers a comparatively wider range of phenomena than the rather late, ‘modern’ one of “emerging subjectivity”, but my micro-analysis of a chapter in Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq’s *Sāq* of 1855, doubtlessly a foundational text of Nahḍa thought and literary sensibility, had a focus on exactly that emerging subjectivity already before I began to see the many features appearing in this key text under this umbrella. My close reading of the *Sāq*’s thirteenth chapter, “On a *maqāma*”, therefore not only confirms the ‘in-betweenness’ – mentioned earlier in several chapters of the present book (especially Chapter 5) – of the traditional genres in the transitional period, but it also returns to other aspects, all interrelated, of emerging subjectivity, such as the subject’s wish to assert itself as public intellectual, as an instance of critical observation, sharp analysis, and witty, playful comment, as well as a knowledgeable mediator and superior arbiter between indigenous tradition (a rich and valuable heritage, but sometimes also an obstacle on the way to progress and civilisation) and innovation (promising rupture with dated customs and institutions, but very often also imprudently imposed, and introduced without solid knowledge and thinking of possible consequences).

The chapter also links up to the question of periodisation of the Nahḍa, addressed above in, among others, Chapters 1 and 2, as it places the *Sāq* between what in the West is called Romanticism and Realism, and right in the middle of a ‘global’ period of “Reproductionism” (W. Falk) in which individual subjectivity seeks to rebel against an Old Order, or System, that is not only experienced as dated but also as unhuman, and where this individual subjectivity in the end still

1 Elger and Köse, eds. 2010. – In its turn, this article built on a paper that was first given on a panel, organized by Stefan Reichmuth and Raoul Findeisen, on “The Genesis of the Intellectual in Asian and African Context since the 19th Century”, held September 22, 2004, in Halle a.d.S., Germany, on occasion of the 29th Congress of German Oriental Studies (DOT).

has to accept the System's hardly shakeable power and so eventually to content him-/herself with an individualising reproduction of the Genreal and Lawful.² Al-Shidyāq practised this reproductionism not only in his very individualising interpretation of what a *maqāma* can be (while inscribing himself in the very same genre tradition), but he also lived it in everyday life in Paris (where he emphasised his being an 'Oriental', proud of his indigenous tradition, in the way he dressed and behaved).³

The results of my micro-analysis can serve as a fine evidence of the fact that al-Shidyāq was already fully integrated into global discourses of modernity. This means that the process of the emerged subject's individuation can be considered to be completed already at that time and that, consequently, it must have begun much earlier, making itself felt in early nineteenth century at the latest, but probably much earlier.⁴

* * *

8.1 Introduction

Among the classical Arabic genres that continued to enjoy wide popularity in pre-modern times was also the one which is often labelled the 'most Arabic' of all,⁵ the *maqāma*. Of the tens, if not hundreds of *maqāmāt* that were written during the whole nineteenth century,⁶ fairly a dozen is esteemed to be worth mentioning – *en passant* – in older literary histories, among these also the four *maqāmāt* that (Aḥmad) Fāris al-Shidyāq (1805–1887) included in his seminal work, published in Paris in 1855, *al-Sāq 'alā l-sāq fī-mā huwa l-Fāryāq*.

Al-Shidyāq is unanimously regarded one of the few great *udabā'* (men of letters, *literati*) of his time, as a most enlightened intellectual and a great reformer.⁷

² For the componential structure of 'global' "Reproductionism" according to W. Falk, see above, end of introductory section to Chapter 4, and in particular (sub-) Chapter 18.3.

³ See below, note 36.

⁴ For pre-nineteenth century subjectivity, see notes 15 and 55 in Chapter 6.

⁵ Cf., e.g., its characterisation by [C. Brockelmann-] Ch. Pellat 1986, 107, as "a purely and typically Arabic literary genre".

⁶ A number of them are listed, e.g., in [Brockelmann-] Pellat, *ibid.*, or Hafez 1993, 108–11; cf. also the short summary in my own *Brückenschläge* (Guth 2003b), 180–83. Hämeen-Anttila 2002 does mention al-Shidyāq's *maqāmāt*, but only briefly and without going into further detail.

⁷ Karam 1964, 800, even calls him "the forerunner, if not actually the first, of the progressive reformers". – For biographical information, cf. *ibid.*, but also many others, among them Roper 1998, *passim*, and Bushnaq 2002.

(He is especially known as the editor of one of the first Arabic weeklies, *al-Jawā'ib*, which appeared from 1861 to 1884 in Istanbul and was distributed in the whole Arab world; and he is also famous as the 'founder' of independent journalism and the one who helped the modern newspaper article, the *maqāla*, to its final breakthrough.)⁸ But since the *maqāmāt* contained in his *Sāq* are *maqāmāt*, i.e., because they belong to what has come to be looked upon as a dying tradition, they had not been submitted to closer examination for one and a half centuries. It was only in 2005 that Katia Zakharia dedicated a detailed study to them in *Arabica*⁹ and thus started to fill a lacuna the existence of which is all the more astonishing because, if al-Shidyāq is really such a great reformer and enlightened intellectual, then the fact that he did insert some of these symbols of the classical tradition in his text, must be as interesting and significant as the way how he complied with the norms of the genre.

The present study will try to highlight *al-Sāq* 'alà l-sāq as an 'ego document'. The method followed is that of a micro-analysis of the first of the four *maqāmāt* contained in *al-Sāq*, taking it as a *pars pro toto* in which the author's stance vis-à-vis his own literary heritage, and contemporary society and traditions, is expressed in an exemplary way. I will start with an analytical description of the *maqāma*'s features that tries to assign them a place on a scale between 'tradition' and 'innovation'. From my analytical findings I will conclude that what al-Shidyāq does here can be interpreted as a kind of 'subjectivist revolution' in that he uses the classical genre in order to focus on the narrating subject rather than on the 'trickster' character that is at the center of attention in premodern *maqāmāt*.

8.2 Continuities

Al-Shidyāq's *maqāma* shows all the main ingredients that have become typical of the genre:¹⁰

It is written in a highly rhetoricized rhyme prose (*saǧ'*). The beginning of the internal narrator's story may serve as an example (*italics* indicating rhyming elements, with the rhyme changing from time to time):

⁸ Karam 1964.

⁹ Zakharia 2005.

¹⁰ For these, cf., for instance, the entries "Maqāma" (R. Drory) in *EAL*, ii (1998), 507–8, or [Brockelmann-] Pellat, in *El²* (1986). – A short overview over the history of the genre is Devin Stewart's "The *Maqāma*" (2006). A concise, but very good introduction can also be found in Al-len 1992b, 15–20.

'araqtu fi laylatin khāfiyati l-kawkab * bādiyati l-haydab * ṭawīlati l-dhanab * mal'ā min-a l-kurab * 'ilā l-karab * fa-ja'altu 'anāmu 'alā ṣahrī marratan wa-'alā janbī 'ukhrā * wa-ataṣawwaru shakhṣan nā'isan 'amāmi yatathā'abu wa-'ākhara yankhuru *nakhrā* * wa-'ākhara yatahawwamu *sakrā* * fa-'inna l-taṣawwura fi-mā qālū yab'athu 'alā fi'li mā tarhabu n-*naḥsu fih* * wa-yunshītu 'ilā mā taṣbū 'ilayhi wa-*tashtahīh* * ...¹¹

(al-Shidyāq, ed. Davies, 1855/2013, 190, I:13,2)

To drive rhetorisation still farther, most classical *maqāmāt* also contain, and sometimes to a large part even consist of, poetry. Al-Shidyāq's *maqāma* follows this 'rule' in that it culminates in a poem (of 16 verses, see below.)

Like most pieces of the two major exponents of the classical *maqāma*, 'Badī' al-Zamān' al-Hamadhānī (968–1008) and Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. 'Alī al-Ḥarīrī (1054–1122), al-Shidyāq's *maqāma*, too, has two main characters. As in the classical tradition, one of them is a first-person narrator and the other a rather strange, sometimes rogue-like, but always very witty and eloquent (*baligh*) person (often referred to as a *pícaro*). With the name of his narrator al-Shidyāq also makes a direct reference to al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī (see below) and thus almost overdoes his inscription into the classical tradition.

Moreover, al-Shidyāq imitates also the classical way of opening a *maqāma* with a *isnād*, the formula characteristic of a *ḥadīth* (report on sayings and/or deeds of the prophet Muḥammad).¹² Together with the names of the narrators

¹¹ In René Khawam's French translation: "Au cours d'une nuit d'insomnie, une nuit qui avait caché ses luminaires et fait pendre jusqu'à terre ses lambeaux de nuées, une nuit qui n'en finissait pas de tirer sa traîne, où s'accumulaient de sinistres figures, je m'efforçai de dormir, me mettant tantôt sur le dos, tantôt sur la côté, et me figurant avoir devant moi quelqu'un qui tombait de sommeil, bâillait et ronflait comme une cheminée, accompagné, pour faire bonne mesure, d'un ivrogne qui dodelinait du chef. On dit en effet que l'imagination incline à réaliser l'acte où le désir vous pousse, et seconde l'âme dans l'élan qu'elle veut prendre" – Shidyāq, tr. Khawam 1855/1991, 129–30. – Davies' English rendering also imitates the internal rhymes (*italics*): "Sleepless I lay on a night on which the stars were *concealed*, the clouds *revealed*, a night *never-ending*, full of worries to anguish *rending*. Now on my back to sleep I *tried*, now on any other *side*, placing before my eyes the image of a person drowsing or yawning or *snoring*, or of another into a drunken stupor *falling*. Imagination, they say, is conducive to the doing of the thing for which you *burn*, and stimulates the achievement of that for which you *yearn* [...]" – al-Shidyāq, tr. Davies 1855/2013, 191.

¹² On account of this *isnād*, some scholars argue that the genre was already meant to be a parody on scholarly *ḥadīth* when al-Hamadhānī 'invented' it, cf. (Brockelmann-) Pellat 1986 and Drory 1998.

(*ḥaddathanā X...*, *ḥaddathanā Y...* ‘X resp. Y reported to us that...’), this has become a kind of generic ‘marker’ for *maqāmāt* in general, and al-Shidyāq remains faithful to tradition, here again.¹³

As in classical *maqāmāt*, the story told by al-Shidyāq’s narrator, too, is quite a ‘dramatic’ one,¹⁴ and it also culminates in a sudden resolution of the dramatic suspense through the pointed speech of the *baligh*, the eloquent witty second protagonist. In al-Shidyāq’s *maqāma*, the story starts with the narrator, a certain al-Hāris b. Hithām (for this name, see below), being unable to find sleep one night.¹⁵ In order to pass his time, he goes to fetch a book from his library.¹⁶ In the book, an old authority holds an opinion that al-Hāris can hardly approve of,

13 In addition, Zakharia notices that not only the *isnād* reminds of al-Shidyāq’s forerunners, but also the first sentence as a whole, since it is clearly modeled after the beginning of al-Ḥarīrī’s *maqāma faraḍiyya* – see Zakharia 2005, 502.

14 Based on A. Kilito’s model (1976; revised by J. T. Monroe in 1983), Stewart gives a typical sequence of elements as follows: “1. The transmitter arrives in a city; 2. Formation of an assembly or gathering for learned discussion; 3. The protagonist enters the assembly; 4. The protagonist undertakes an eloquent performance; 5. Rewarding of the protagonist by the transmitter or other characters; 6. The protagonist leaves assembly, which breaks up; 7. The transmitter realizes the protagonist’s true identity; 8. The transmitter follows the protagonist; 9. The transmitter accosts or reproaches the protagonist; 10. Justification by the protagonist; 11. Parting of the two; 12. Departure of the transmitter from the city (implicit)” – Stewart 2006, 147. – As a matter of fact, this scheme was not always strictly followed, but modified and changed time and again, not only by later authors, but also by representatives of the classical age. However, it *has* constantly remained a point of orientation for intertextual reference – which is the case in al-Shidyāq’s *Sāq* too.

15 “Sleepless I lay on a night on which the stars were *concealed*, the clouds *revealed*, a night *never-ending*, full of worries to anguish *trending*. Now on my back to sleep I *tried*, now on any other *side*, placing before my eyes the image of a person drowsing or yawning or *snoring*, or of another into a drunken stupor *falling*. Imagination, they say, is conducive to the doing of the thing for which you *burn*, and stimulates the achievement of that for which you *yearn* [...]” – al-Shidyāq, tr. Davies 1855/2013, 190–91.

16 The book’s title is *Muwāzanat al-ḥālatayn wa-murāzanat al-ālatayn*, the author a certain Abū Rushd Nuḥya b. Ḥazm. Davies translates the title as *The Book of Balancing the Two States and Comparing the Two Straits*, adding that it “may be intended to evoke the *Kitāb al-Muwāzanah bayna Abī Tammām wa-l-Buḥturī* of al-Āmidī, although the latter compares not good and evil but the literary accomplishments of two poets” – al-Shidyāq, tr. Davies 1855/2013, 339, note 220. As for the author, Davies renders his name as “the Honored Shaykh and Productive Scholar of Perfect Virtue, Abū Rushd ‘Brains’ ibn Ḥazm” (ibid., 192–93), explaining that this “evokes two of the best known writers of the Maghreb – Ibn Rushd, known in the West as Averroes (520–95/1126–98), and Ibn Ḥazm (384–456/994–1064) – although the significance of the choice of these writers is not obvious. *Nuhyah*, literally ‘mind’, is not part of the name of either writer” (ibid., 339, note 221).

namely that in life pleasure prevails over suffering. The next day, he immediately goes to see five living authorities, all of them representatives of the educated elite of that time: a bishop (*muṭrān*), a teacher (*mu'allim*), an expert in *sharī'a* law (*faqīh*), a poet (*shā'ir*), and a scribe/secretary/writer (*kātib*). However, none of them is able to help the narrator solve his existential problem. Their answers to his question about the acceptability of the old philosopher's opinion are all totally inadequate and testify to a formalist thinking far removed from the practical demands of everyday life: the *mu'allim*, for instance, suggests to cut out from the old authority's book the passages in favour of the preponderance of pleasant over unpleasant things, as well as those maintaining the contrary, and then weigh both on a pair of scales, and the *faqīh* proposes a mechanical word-counting. Disappointed at the answers of those whom people hold to be the most learned of their time, the authoritative representatives of knowledge, the narrator now sets out to seek help from a *dhū ḥadātha* (which can either mean “young man” or, more probably here, a “modernist”, an “innovator”), and this man – the second protagonist – is very quick in providing a solution: the eloquent hero who he is extemporates a short poem that simply but very convincingly states that everyone endowed with common sense knows that pleasures in life are only like “a drop in the sea” – that's it!

'ataytanī mustaftiyan fī 'amrī

* ya'lamuhū kullu 'mri'in dhī ḥijrī¹⁷

al-khayru 'in qābaltahū bi-l-sharri

* fī l-'umri kāna quṭratan min baḥrī

[metre: *rajaz*]

You came to me seeking an answer –

* One to mindful men¹⁷ already known – to a question.

Good, compared to evil

* Is, over a life span, as a drop to an ocean.

(al-Shidyāq, tr. Davies 1855/2013, 198–99)

Taking together the elements listed so far, it is clear that al-Shidyāq is very conscious of the classical *maqāma* tradition and in a way even seeks to inscribe himself into it.

¹⁷ “mindful men” (*dhī ḥijrin*): an echo of Qur'ān, *Fajr* 89:5 – al-Shidyāq, tr. Davies 1855/2013, 340, note 226.

8.3 Ruptures and Changes

On the other hand, there are a considerable number of alterations. I will name only a few.

Unlike in the classical tradition, where several *maqāmāt* usually form a book in themselves, i.e., a mono-generic collection, al-Shidyāq's *maqāmāt* are only one of several other options within the generic diversity of *al-Sāq*. Rotraud Wielandt has aptly characterized the whole book as a blending of "travel account, autobiographical novel, *maqāma* parody and lexicological study"¹⁸ that serves, as it may seem, quite a number of heterogeneous purposes:

presentation of his own life, discussion of philosophical questions and issues of social politics, information on the countries where he had traveled, display of philological mastery, questioning of literary conventions, entertainment.

(Wielandt 1980, 80; my translation, S.G.)¹⁹

The *maqāmāt* are therefore to be treated as parts of a multi-generic diversity that the author is eager to display as being under his command. This diversity is however not a random mixture but a complex whole in which each element seems to be functional; the *maqāmāt* therefore are not only one among many disparate elements, but an *integral* part of that whole.²⁰

18 "ein Zwischending zwischen Reisebericht, autobiographischem Roman, Maqāmenparodie und lexikalischer Studie": Wielandt 1980, esp. 77–98, here 73 (my translation, S.G.). – The question of genre is explicitly addressed by Peled 1985; the author concludes that the *Sāq* is best characterised as a "Menippean satire" (ibid., 44 ff.). Cf., however, Al-Bagdadi 1999a, 391, who terms the *Sāq* a "novel".

19 Original German: "Darbietung [d]er eigenen Lebensgeschichte, Diskussion philosophischer und gesellschaftspolitischer Fragen, Information über die von ihm bereisten Länder, Demonstration philologischer Feinheiten, Infragestellung literarischer Konventionen, Unterhaltung". – Al-Bagdadi 1999a, 391, assigns the *Sāq* "a twofold goal: the rejection of prevalent social and cultural norms and their inherent *Weltanschauung*, and a claim for the legitimacy of the new age of modernity."

20 This becomes clear, among others, from the fact that, in the opening passage of the first *maqāma*, the author has already a distinct idea of the structure of the whole *Sāq*: after this first *maqāma*, he says, there will be three others to follow, each of them as 'chapter 13' of a total of the four 'books' of the *Sāq*, so that "[t]he total number of *maqāmāhs* in it will [...], I believe, be four" – al-Shidyāq, tr. Davies 1855/2013, 190–91. – For the integral function of seemingly still more disparate elements as, e.g., the long lists of vocabulary items, cf. Zakharia 2005, 509–16, and before her already Peled 1991, passim; for in-depth studies of the phenomenon, see Junge 2019a and id. 2019b.

From the chapter's title, which is "*Fī maqāma*" (On a *maqāma*), it follows that al-Shidyāq's piece is in itself meant to be a comment on *maqāma* writing in general.²¹ This 'meta-dimension' testifies to a distance to the genre which seems at the same time reflexive and playful.

It is certainly also an element of irony. The *maqāma* abounds in these, but I will only mention the most disrespectful instances:

The *maqāma* proper is preceded by a short introduction which goes like this:

A while has passed now since I tasked myself with writing in rhymed prose [*saj'*] and patterned period [*tajnis*]²², and I think I've forgotten how to do so. I must therefore put my faculties to the test in this chapter, which is worthier than the rest – because it's higher in number than the twelfth and lower than the fourteenth – and I shall continue to do so in every chapter branded with this number till I've finished my four books. The total number of *maqāmahs* in it will therefore, I believe, be four.

(al-Shidyāq, tr. Davies 1855/2013, 190–91)

As if an educated person with some respect for the great classical tradition could ever forget about *saj'* and *tajnis*, at a time when ornate prose still used to be one of the fundamental writing skills and a respected man of letters had to legitimize his claim to belong to the educated elite by producing something in ornate prose! Al-Shidyāq underlines his disrespectful mocking of these norms not only by the lapidarity of the words "and I think I may have forgotten it" (*wa-aḥsibunī nasītu dhālik*) but also by the nonsense reason he gives for including a *maqāma* at exactly this position of the *Sāq*.

²¹ This is also Katia Zakharia's interpretation, cf. Zakharia 2005, 498, where she renders the expression *Fī maqāma* as "à propos d'une *maqāma*". René Khawam circumscribes the title as "Une séance, ou comment ce chapitre treizième enseigne à s'asseoir" – al-Shidyāq (Chidyāq), tr. Khawam 1855/1991, 129 – and thus suggests that the subtitle of the first *maqāma* should be read somehow parallel to the subtitles of the remaining three, which are (2) *Fī maqāma muq'ida*, (3) *Fī maqāma muqīma*, and (4) *Fī maqāma mumshiya*, i.e., in Khawam's rendering, (2) "une séance qui (...) oblige à rester sur son séant", (3) "une séance qui amène, paradoxalement, à se lever", (4) "une séance qui (...) fait marcher" (ibid., 291, 494, 670, respectively) [Zakharia has: (2) "à propos d'une *maqāma* qui laisse impuissant", 'privé de mouvement' ou '... qui lasse assis', (3) "la *maqāma* qui fait se lever", (4) "la *maqāma* qui fait se mettre en marche" – Zakharia 2005, 499]. Since the first *maqāma*'s subtitle does not have a *muf'il* (form IV) participle denoting a type of movement, it is however not very plausible that the notion of 'instruction how to sit down' is contained in *Fī maqāma* – this is why I prefer simply "about a *maqāma*".

²² Also called *jinās*, in many, if not most (but by far not all) cases equalling our 'paronymasy', a rhetorical figure playing on homonymy.

That al-Shidyāq is ironicizing the very fundamentals of *maqāma* writing here will be even more obvious when the remarks of the introductory paragraph become paralleled with the disrespect of pure *saj'* as expressed a little earlier in the book. There, the writer despises *saj'* openly as being “like a wooden leg for him who wants to walk”.²³

A major element of irony in the *maqāma* is, as a matter of course, also the way in which al-Shidyāq sarcastically portrays traditional learning and respected institutions of knowledge like the bishop, teacher, *sharī'a* law expert, poet, and scribe/secretary (see above). We may also add to this group the old ‘philosopher’ whose book the narrator happens to take out from his library the night he cannot find sleep. Not only is the latter’s opinion on the preponderance of pleasure over suffering in life reduced to absurdity in the end (and, earlier, through the narrator’s own experience already²⁴), but al-Shidyāq also mocks him by attaching a strange name to him.²⁵

The opening sentence which in al-Hamadhānī’s *maqāmāt* usually is “ḥaddathanā ‘Īsā b. Hishām...” (‘Īsā b. Hishām reported to us...) and the name of al-Ḥārīrī’s trickster, al-Ḥārith b. Hammām, are blended into each other and in al-Shidyāq’s *maqāma* become “ḥadasa al-Hāris b. Hithām”. That is, the good old Arabic names al-Ḥārith and Hishām become softened and, if one can say so, ‘lispalized’ into Hāris and Hithām (*h>h, th>s, sh>th*),²⁶ while at the same time the narrator’s name now means something like “the Crusher, son of the Smasher”;²⁷ and the honorable formula of transmitting a *ḥadīth*, probably a parody already

²³ “al-saj’ li-l-mu’allif ka-l-rijl min khashab li-l-māshī”, *al-Sāq*, book 1, opening of ch. 10 (my translation; S.G.). Sulaiman Jubran collected still a number of other sayings on the uselessness of *saj’* for its own sake, cf. Jubran 1989, here 150.

²⁴ Cf. the narrator’s immediate reaction after reading the philosopher’s words: “[I said to myself], ‘Glory be! Every writer, however great, must on occasion be out of joint’” – al-Shidyāq, tr. Davies 1855/2013, 192–93.

²⁵ As Zakharia 2005, 505, has it, “Abū Ruṣd Nuhyā Ibn Ḥazm est un composé construit à partir des noms de deux célèbres penseurs originaires tous deux de l’Occident musulman, Ibn Ruṣd (Averroes, m. 1198) et Ibn Ḥazm (m. 1064). [Fn. 33:] Nuhyā est parasyronyme de ‘aql”.

²⁶ To imitate the “lipping tones”, Davies renders the name as “al-Hāwif ibn Hifām” – al-Shidyāq, tr. Davies 1855/2013, 191. – Cf. Zakharia 2005, 501, adds that, “Hiṭām, c’est la manière dont une personne qui aurait un ‘cheveu’ sur la langue, confondant dentale et interdental spirants sourdes, prononcerait Hiṣām”. A similar confusion is noticed, *ibid.*, for ‘Hāris’ instead of ‘Ḥārīrī’ and thought to be hinting at “les orientalistes ou traducteurs officiels européens” among whom the two kinds of confusion were “courantes à l’époque de Ṣidyāq”.

²⁷ Davies translates it as “Masher, son of Pulverizer” – al-Shidyāq, tr. Davies 1855/2013, 339 (fn. 219), while Zakharia 2005, 500, has “Pulvériseur fils de Broyé”.

with al-Hamadhānī,²⁸ has become ridiculously distorted, since the verb of the classical *isnād*, *ḥaddatha* “he reported”, has been replaced by al-Shadyāq with *ḥadasa*, turning the trustworthiness and seriousness of ‘transmitting a report’ into pure ‘conjecturing’; the comic effect of parodying a parody is underlined again through the *th>s* shift and the softening *dd>d* from classical *ḥaddatha* to al-Shidyāq’s *ḥadasa*.²⁹

As regards content, an overall intellectualisation is to be observed. The theme – pleasure and suffering in life – is a philosophical question, the narrator is an intellectual (he owns a large library!), and the witty trickster of the classical *maqāmāt* too has now become a witty intellectual. Furthermore, the whole *maqāma* is used as a vehicle for a specifically intellectual activity – social criticism (cf. the very unpleasant comments on the learned authorities’ stupidity). With this, the *maqāma* is the whole *Sāq* in a nutshell, since al-Shidyāq meant his book to be a treatise containing *observations critiques* (critical observations), as the French subtitle translates the Arabic ‘*ajm*, which literally means “to bite on a coin in order to know if it is genuine”.³⁰ While for the classical genre social criticism cannot safely be assumed to have been a major motive of writing,³¹ it has explicitly become one in the *maqāmāt* of al-Shidyāq’s *Sāq*. (NB: The fact that the purpose of composing a *maqāma* has been subdued here to the purpose of the

²⁸ See above, fn. 12.

²⁹ For contemporaries this opening must have sounded similarly shocking as did Richard Wagner’s *Tristan* chord for its listeners as it went until the very limits of what was allowed in classical and even early Romantic harmonics (only a few years after the *Sāq*, by the way!) and in this way created an immense and highly expressive inner tension. In the *Sāq*, this tension is, of course, not tragic and serious as in *Tristan*, but nonetheless challenging and provocative; for the contemporaries, its effect must have been almost obscene.

³⁰ The whole subtitle literally reads “Days, months, and years [spent in] putting Arabs and non-Arabs to the critical test” (*ayyām wa-shuhūr wa-a’wām fi ‘ajm al-‘arab wa-l-a’jām*) which the author himself translates into French on the cover as “(La vie et les aventures de Fariac,) Relation de ses voyages, avec ses observations critiques sur les arabes et sur les autres peuples”.

³¹ While there is an “obvious humorist intent” (Drory 1998) in most of the classical *maqāmāt*, a reading as social criticism may well be too modern an interpretation. For al-Hamadhānī (d. 1008) the “comic relief” after serious sessions is probably the starting point from which he indulges in “parodic variations on familiar, often well-chewed pieces of *adab* knowledge”, while with al-Ḥarīrī (d. 1122) the main purpose is already the display of “eloquence and stylistic dexterity”, and he focusses on “language, style and edifying subject matter” (*ibid.*). – Cf. however J. Christoph Bürgel’s arguments in favour of ‘social criticism’ in his “Gesellschaftskritik im Schelmengewand” (Bürgel 1991).

whole book may serve as a further evidence of the author following a holistic vision rather than simply putting together disparate elements for mere entertainment, see above.) The overall tone is anti-idealist, eventually even pessimist:

<i>fa-laysa dunyānā li-ahli l-khibrī</i>	*	<i>siwā balā'in dā'imīn wa-khusrī</i>
<i>yūladu fihā l-'abdu ghayra ḥurrin</i>	*	<i>wa-hākadhā yamūtu ragħman fa-'drī</i>
This world of ours, to those who know,	*	Is naught but loss and tribulation that we must endure.
Man's born enslaved, not free,	*	And so he dies, of that you may be sure.
		(al-Shidyāq, tr. Davies 1855/2013, 200–01)

Making the *maqāma* a vehicle for 'ajm also means reclaiming content from the rhetorical mannerism into which much of *maqāma* writing had fallen by al-Shidyāq's times (this is why the whole genre could become so despised by the new educated elites during the second half of the century and why it eventually died out). This anti-mannerist turn is in itself paralleled by the emphasis on 'natural' thinking, on common sense (cf. "the man endowed with common sense", *imru' dhū ḥijr*, in the verse quoted above), and on empiricism (cf. the way the narrator confronts the medieval philosopher Abū Rushd's idea that pleasure and delight may be evoked by facts [*fī'l*] as well as through imagination [*taṣawwur*], with the fact that he himself had still been unable to find sleep although he had imagined himself in front of a person yawning etc. – al-Shidyāq, tr. Davies 1855/2013, 192–93).

A further significant deviation from the classical model, and probably the most important one in the context of 'ego documents', is the eminent role attributed to the narrating subject in/by al-Shidyāq's text.³² A classical *maqāma* has an author (say, al-Hamadhānī or al-Ḥarīrī) who 'installs' a first-person narrator (ʿĪsā b. Hishām in al-Hamadhānī's case, al-Ḥārith b. Hammām in al-Ḥarīrī's) who in turn tells the story, as if it were a *ḥadīth*, of his encounter with the intradiegetic hero, the witty eloquent trickster/*pícaro* (Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī with al-Hamadhānī, Abū Zayd al-Sarūjī with al-Ḥarīrī). In an average *maqāma*, the trickster and his deeds are at the center of attention, and they are also allotted the

32 Cf. for the following also Zakharia's section *Les voix de la narration* – Zakharia 2005, 499–500. – Al-Bagdadi, too, holds that it is "in the author's construction of the authorial personae" that "[t]he most radical and significant alteration [vis-à-vis traditional narratives] occurs" – Al-Bagdadi 1999a, 392.

most space. In al-Shidyāq's text, however, things are different and much more complex (cf. Fig. 1).

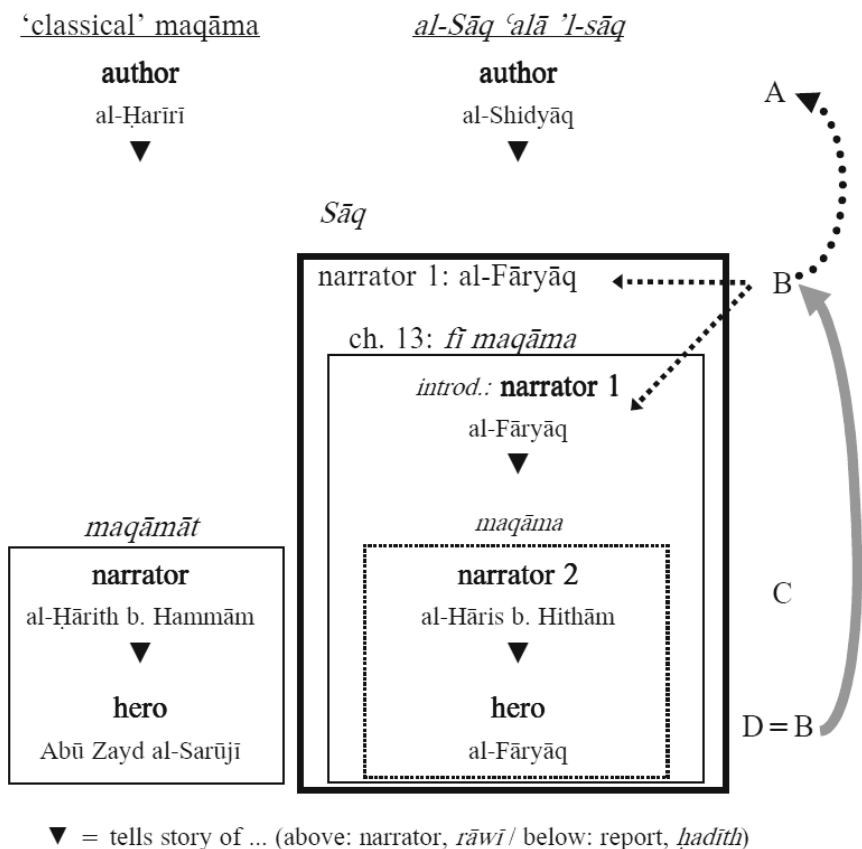


Fig. 1: Author and narrator – Levels of narrative, and reference to author al-Shidyāq

There, al-Shidyāq the Author (as figuring on the book's cover) installs a first-person narrator, whom he calls "al-Fāryāq", as the narrator of the whole book. It is easy to discern that this rather strange name refers back to the author himself because it is composed of the first part of **Fāris** and the second of **Shidyāq**: Fāryāq. Now, this Fāryāq, who serves as the author's *alter ego* throughout the *Sāq*, in the 13th chapter of the book gives a short introduction to the *maqāma* which is to follow, then appoints another first-person narrator (al-Hāris b. Hithām), who

eventually meets the second protagonist, the eloquent trickster. While a classical *maqāma* would normally focus on the *pícaro*'s trickery and his verbal art, in al-Shidyāq's text the modern counterpart of the trickster does not make his appearance earlier than on the last but one of a whole of five pages, i.e., the emphasis here is on the narrator of the *maqāma*, al-Hāris b. Hithām, rather than on the character who would be the real hero in classical texts. Moreover, when the modern *pícaro* finally *does* appear he turns out to be a narrating subject again – he is nobody else than al-Fāryāq, the narrator of the *Sāq*! As a result, there is a double emphasis on the narrating subjects, and especially al-Fāryāq *a.k.a.* al-Shidyāq.³³

Whereas in the classical *maqāma* the hero usually “appears in a certain public place (a market, a mosque, a cemetery, a public bath, a traveling caravan, etc.) [...] and tricks people into donating him money by manipulating their feelings and beliefs” (Drory 1998), these elements are absent from al-Shidyāq's text. The public space has been substituted with the room where al-Fāryāq is very busy with copying (*naskh*),³⁴ and although the protagonist shares some of the characteristics of the classical *pícaro* (the strange beggar-like appearance which makes the narrator feel pity with him, and eloquence), he does not fool his audience but rather guides his visitor to the simple truth in the philosophical question (see ‘intellectualisation’, ‘realism’, ‘common sense’, ‘empiricism’ above).

8.4 Conclusions

I think it has become evident from my analysis that Arabic literature could be very lively and innovative already *before* it came to feel the need to conform to non-Arabic, Europeanizing modes of writing. The adoption of the latter became widespread by the 1870s, especially with translations from French and English as well as the type of stories Salīm al-Bustānī serialized in his *al-Jinān* (Beirut).³⁵ Al-Shidyāq's approach to the *maqāma* (and all the other classical genres on which he

33 Zakharia calls it a “dédoublement, faisant vivre l'auteur tant dans le narrateur que dans le héros” as well as a “jeu de miroir”; she too thinks that this “fragmentation de l'instance de l'auteur démultiplie ses images et renforce dans le texte sa présence parce qu'elle la fait éclater” – Zakharia 2005, 499–500.

34 This may be read as another reference to al-Shidyāq the Author, since it is known that in his youth al-Shidyāq had earned his living as a copyist, that he kept the habit of copying whole books with his own hand and that large parts of his private library consisted of books he had hand-copied himself. Cf. Roper 1995, 211.

35 The first ‘Western-style’ Arabic narrative is probably Khalil al-Khūrī's *Wāy 'idhan lastu bi-ʿifranjī!* (Woe! So I am not a European then?, 1859). [See Chapters 4 and 9 of the present volume. –

heavily draws in *al-Sāq*) however shows that critical thinking, reform and innovation was possible also from within the autochthonous indigenous tradition (and would probably have been carried on from there had the East been spared colonial intervention and the total overthrow of self-esteem as well as the loss of trust in the own traditions that accompanied it). Pre-Westernized Arabic literature is therefore extremely worth a closer look; though still wearing a more or less traditional garment, a text from this epoch may express very modern thoughts and may well be a document of what we call Modern Times.³⁶

If we look at literature as forming an integral part of an overall *cultural* system and at literary genres as being also *cultural* norms, then al-Shidyāq's treatment of the *maqāma* tradition testifies to the formation of an intellectual culture from *within* the autochthonous tradition.³⁷ Al-Shidyāq then could be seen as representative of a group of individuals within the old educated elite who strove to conquer a domain, rich in symbolic capital, from traditional authorities like the bishops, the teachers, the *fuqahā*' etc., and this group of reformists tried to beat the old authorities at their own game, using a classical genre – the mastering of which had been a symbol of their claim to an elitarian standing – against its misuse through this very same old elite.³⁸

Last point: periodisation. The search for 'individuals' and/or 'egos' outside the European context has been so intense in recent years because in the West their emergence is believed to mark the beginning of new eras, be it Modern Times, or Renaissance, or Enlightenment, etc., whereas Orientalism had denied the 'backward' East its participation in these epochs on account of, among other reasons, an alleged lack of individual, anti-traditional thinking and a missing ego-perspective. These, it was believed, were introduced into the East only with

For a recent edition of one of Salim al-Bustānī's most important novels, *al-Huyām fī jinān al-Shām*, see al-Bustānī 1870, ed. Jonsson and Guth 2023. – An own study of another of al-Bustānī's novels, *Bint al-'aṣr* (1875), is Guth 1999 = Chapter 10 in the present volume.]

36 The text, then, mirrors the habitus of its author, who even when he was living in Europe for several years "resolutely refused to wear European clothes and remained always faithful to his tarboosh and Turkish fashion" and who therefore "must have been a remarkable spectacle on the streets of Victorian London and Paris of the Second Empire", as A. J. Arberry 1952, 156, imagined; but despite his 'Oriental' appearance he was undoubtedly modern.

37 Cf. the findings of Carter Findley as summed up by Geoffrey Roper: "In the forefront of th[e] process [...] which amounted to nothing less than the modernisation and renewal of the literary and intellectual culture of the Middle East, were certain litterateurs – *udabā*' – who [...] came from the old literary scribal elite, but evolved into the vanguard of the new culture" – Roper 1995, 210, with reference to Findley 1989, 132.

38 Cf. also Roper 1995 who holds that al-Shidyāq represents "the Transition from Scribal to Print Culture in the Middle East" (title of article).

the advent of the Europeans, and it was only when the ‘Orientals’ began to imitate Western forms that they came to know subjectivity, et cetera. It is obvious, however, from my above analysis that despite al-Shidyāq’s use of ‘very Arabic’ literary genres such as the *maqāma*,³⁹ he made a very individualistic, subjective use of the elements of tradition that he had at his disposal, and that he thought of himself as an individual in quite the same way as his Western contemporaries. To stress my point, I would even dare to conclude that he already participated fully in the global discourses of his time. While Orientalism tended to let cultural ‘evolution’ happen in the East with a time-lag of almost a century when compared to the West (Enlightenment, e.g., which is an eighteenth-century phenomenon in the West, was said to have gained momentum in the East not before the late nineteenth century), I would think that what al-Shidyāq does in *al-Sāq* has let Enlightenment already far behind and is rather to be localized, on a European scale of cultural/literary history, somewhere between Romanticism and Realism, i.e., at the same point of ‘evolution’ at which his European contemporaries had arrived by the same time (cf. Fig. 2). As a whole, *al-Sāq* is certainly closer already to Realism than it is still to Romanticism, and in this it mirrors exactly the European scene by the middle of the century when Realism had, for the most part, ‘taken over’ from Romanticism, but many Romantic elements simultaneously still remained active. With his aim of critically observing “Arabs and other people” and commenting on the social situation and cultural phenomena, al-Shidyāq resembles authors like, say, Georg Büchner, Heinrich Heine, or the Russian realists. The realists’ (anti-Romanticist) call for an objective observation and description of the world “as it is”, so extensively transformed into literature by Honoré de Balzac in his *Comédie humaine*, a series of almost a hundred novels, is paralleled by al-Shidyāq’s call for common sense and empiricism as the basis for perception and arguing, and his anti-elitist down-to-earth stance that emphasizes Reality (as opposed to the old educated elite’s formalism and the self-referentiality of language that has lost all touch with life). Against the culture of an educated elite (be it the indulgence in mere verbosity and scholasticism in the East or Romantic idealism in the West) both European realists and al-Shidyāq turn to the culture of everyday life and ‘ordinary’ people (though not neglecting intellectual questions). Linguistically, both favour anti-mannerism and a simple prose (al-Shidyāq’s *maqāma* may, at first sight, not be the best example of this, but we have seen that, in contrast to many contemporary *maqāmāt* which are fireworks of verbosity and mere

³⁹ For instance, he also wrote (in 1850) a panegyric on Queen Victoria, in which he compared her to the virgins of Paradise! Cf. Arberry (1952), who gives the whole text in Arabic (157–60) and English translation (160–64).

displays of linguistic dexterity, it reclaims content from the empty form, it *has* an entertaining, pointed story, it *has* a message, and when compared to, say, al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāmāt* it is much more readable, much less demanding).

Tab. 1: al-Shidyāq's *Sāq* between 'Romanticism' and 'Realism'

al-Shidyāq, <i>al-Sāq 'alā l-sāq</i>	Western Romanticism
– blending and juxtaposition of genres, going beyond generic convention and norms	– longing for melting contradictory elements into a harmonic whole – “Universalpoesie” ! (Fr. Schlegel), fusion of poetry, science, philosophy – “Gesamtkunstwerk”! (R. Wagner)
– prominence of/emphasis on narrating subject	– calling for complete subjectivity [cf., e.g., author and narrator of Romantic stories (< Goethe, <i>Werther</i>), solo-part in concerts for instruments solo]
– display of (individual) virtuosity, of ‘geniality’, of highest intellectualism	– cf. piano and violin virtuosos like F. Liszt or N. Paganini (cadences!); the “ingenious thinker”
– meta-dimension: organisation of material, commenting on playing with conventions, self-reflexivity, self-irony	– author takes superior position vis-à-vis his work – “Romantic irony”: marking the ‘falseness’ (illusionism) of a work of art, internal references to fictionality
– antinormativity: irony/parody	– desire to go beyond limits and boundaries, to overthrow norms, call for freedom → ridiculing everything normative
– anti-mannerism: naturalness!	– search for authenticity (fairy tales, sagas, popular songs and dances, myths; experiencing nature, the ‘natural state’ (Rousseau)), the ‘truth’ of the simple, the original, the ‘naive’
– stressing fictionality, phantasy, free play ⁴⁰	– importance of phantasy and creativity (freedom, antinormativity), the artist as the free creative ‘genius’

⁴⁰ Both N. Al-Bagdadi and K. Zakharia stress the ‘play’-fulness of al-Shidyāq’s approach: Al-Bagdadi speaks of “consciously played games [!] of self-referentiality” (1999a, 394), while Zakharia calls it a “jeu [!] de miroir” (see above, fn. 33).

al-Shidyāq, <i>al-Sāq 'alā l-sāq</i>	Western Realism
– social criticism, intellectual comments on life (<i>ajm</i>)	– cf., e.g., Georg Büchner, Heinrich Heine, Russian realists
– strong reference to, and rootedness in, reality, common sense, empiricism	– ‘objective’ observation of the tangible, of the world “as it is”; Balzac, <i>Comédie humaine</i> (almost 100 novels)
– anti-mannerism	– against stylisation and over-rhetoricisation, unornamented prose
– against losing contact to normal/everyday life, anti-scholasticism, attacks on elitism of the old educated elite	– against romantic idealism → everyday life, banality, bourgeois and citizens, workers, ‘ordinary’ people

On the other hand, there are still many traces of Romanticism in *al-Sāq*. The blending of various genres within one single book, where *maqāmāt* are embedded in a mixture of autobiography, travel account, lexicological study, philosophical treatise, etc., which makes it often difficult to decide what sort of text we are dealing with (if seen against the background of classical genres) reminds me of Western romantic ideas of overcoming the essential deficiency and inadequateness of artistic means vis-à-vis the totality and unlimitedness of reality and the universe by dissolving the generic boundaries and a fusion of poetry, science and philosophy in the type of “universal poetry” (*Universalpoesie*) that Friedrich Schlegel called for, or Richard Wagner’s idea of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (a “total”, “integrated”, or “complete artwork”, “an operatic performance encompassing music, theater, and the visual arts”⁴¹). The desire to go beyond the limits and boundaries and to overthrow all norms and conventions is paralleled by, and in fact an expression of, the romantic individual’s longing for absolute freedom, which make take on sentimental tones, but very often is sublimated into an ironical attitude, the expression of the writers’ insight into the tragic transcendence of absolute freedom, and a kind of artistic compromise: ironically, the freedom of ‘total’ objectivity is to be reached only in a metafictional reflexion about the createdness, and thus subjectivity, of a work of art. We have seen that al-Shidyāq’s *Sāq* has this dimension, too: the author disguising himself as “al-Fāryāq” and

⁴¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gesamtkunstwerk> (accessed March 15, 2008). – The idea was developed in 1851, only four years before the publication of *al-Sāq*, in Wagner’s theoretical treatise *Oper und Drama*.

thus pointing to the createdness of the protagonist, while at the same time endowing the ‘fictional’ character with his own traits; cf. also the vexing identity of the *maqāma*’s second protagonist with the narrator of the *Sāq*, al-Fāryāq; very much reminding of European Romantics’ metafictional devices is also al-Shidyāq’s ending a passage of *saj*’ with the self-ironical words: “The *saj*’ ends here because it has filled up the page”;⁴² cf. also N. Al-Bagdadi’s fine characterisation:

His [sc. al-Shidyāq’s] sense for the gap between the word and the world is consciously bridged in al-Šidyāq’s work by his insistence and maintenance of a classical tradition that has lost, as he points out, to a certain extent, its binding authority in the production of sense. Irony fulfills here the function of reconstructing the harmony of a thing and a meaning that is no longer existent –

(Al-Bagdadi 1999a, 401)

a typically Romantic dilemma! – Finally, the most Romanticist element in *al-Sāq* is certainly the emphasis on the narrating subject. It makes itself felt not only in the references the author makes to himself through his narrator(s), as we saw above in his *maqāma*, but throughout the *Sāq* also in the display of the author’s virtuosity, of his unparalleled ‘genius’ and highest intellectualism, which enable him to handle tradition not only with perfect mastery, but also from an ironic distance, as someone who freely plays on and with it and takes it only as a starting-point for his own flights of phantasy.⁴³ It goes without saying that this can easily be compared, e.g., to the prominent role of the virtuoso in Western Romantic music (it suffices to mention, e.g., piano and violin virtuosos like Franz Liszt, 1811–1886, or Nic(c)olò Paganini, 1782–1840, who toured Europe as a kind of ‘supernatural’ beings, heroes gifted with almost devine, ‘demonic’ qualities for whom the brilliant cadences in piano or violin concertos were written, or who improvised them) and the emergence of the ‘ingenious thinker’, who enjoyed equal reverence because of his individual originality, the free creativity of his ‘genius’, the rhapsodic flight of his phantasy.

The assumption that al-Shidyāq, in spite of his rooting in autochthonous traditions, is already fully under the influence of the same global discourses that had ‘taken hold’ of his European contemporaries, may further be substantiated by drawing on another model of periodisation, one which is not so laden, as terms like Romanticism and Realism are, with specifically European associations.

⁴² Quoted by Jubran 1989, 156–7.

⁴³ G. Roper goes as far as saying that “a vibrant individualism, even egotism” can be sensed “throughout al-Shidyāq’s writings”, not only *al-Sāq*, because much of his work “is indeed directly about himself” – Roper 1995, 222.

The term used by German scholar Walter Falk to describe the period between, roughly, 1820 and 1880, is Reproductionism (cf. Fig. 2).

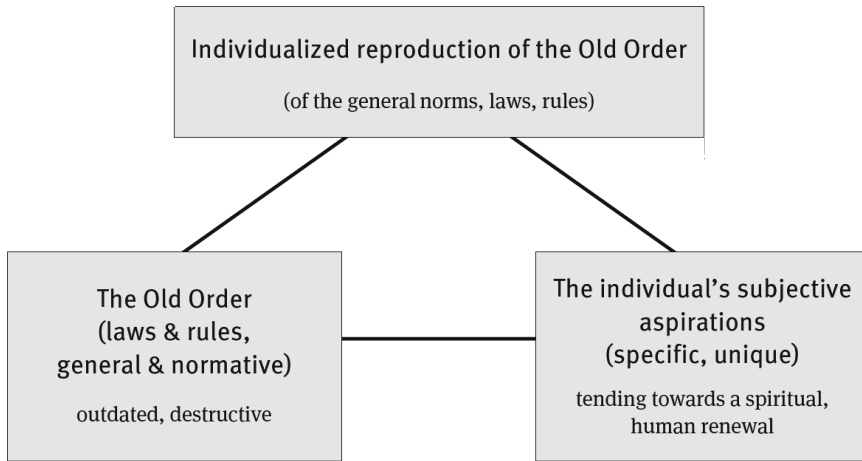


Fig. 2: The ‘Reproductionist’ Period (c. 1820–1880), according to W. Falk⁴⁴

According to Falk, this period is characterized, on the one hand, by the overwhelming experience of an Old Order, a dated system of norms and general rules which are experienced as tending to destroy all life, and on the other hand by an individual subject who tries to reclaim life from this order through a restoration of essentially human values to it; however, the individual is eventually forced, time and again, to realize that the system is essentially unchangeable, and there remains nothing for man therefore as to content oneself with an *individual* reproduction of the Old Order. No question that this is exactly what also al-Shidyāq does and why his individuality and subjectivity stand out even more against the background of his time.

⁴⁴ Falk 1984, 31. [For a discussion of this model, cf. above, Chapters 1 and 2, and introductions to Chapters 4 and 5.]

9 The modern subject sensing its agency

Khalil al-Khūrī's aesthetics of “truth mingled with passion”

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This chapter: As already pointed out in several Chapters above, the ‘global’ period of Reproductionism to which the earlier decades of the Arab(ic) Nahḍa belong, has a strong tendency to express itself in ways and forms that underline the – ultimately unshakable – power of the existing old order or system of general laws and rules, a tendency reflected in an overall “restorative” attitude in politics, an emphasis on realism in the arts, and a belief in all kinds of laws in the sciences (positivism). In the preceding chapters, we have seen that this tendency was very strong also in the Arab(ic) Nahḍa:

- Chapter 1 showed how reluctant Arabs were to leave the political framework of the Ottoman Empire;
- Chapters 4 and 7 demonstrated that, in spite of changing meanings and, thus, a new understanding of old terms like *adab* or *riwāya*, these very same old words were preferred to foreign, non-Arabic terminology;
- in Chapter 8, we have looked into aspects of al-Shidyāq’s realism and neo-classicism in his *Sāq* of 1855;
- and in Chapter 5, we could observe how the Azhar shaykh Ḥusayn al-Marṣafī was eager to treat the modern Western concept of ‘homeland, fatherland’ (French *patrie*) in a similar, ‘neo-classicist’ way, i.e., in terms of the old *waṭan*, reading it in a traditional philological way first, then making a ‘realist turn’ and discussing more practical, down-to-earth matters under the heading;
- in Chapter 4, we followed Khalil al-Khūrī’s and Aḥmed Midḥat’s discussion of the pros and cons of Europeanising trends in their societies and noticed that both concluded with a – liberal and open-minded, yet thought-to-be necessary – sticking to indigenous tradition (al-Khūrī’s *wujūd ahlī*, Midḥat’s *alaturkahk*).

However, while all this can be considered strong proof of the Nahḍa’s appreciative acknowledgement of the old order of things, its conservative, ‘restorative’, ‘reproductionist’ tendencies, as well as its ‘realism’, we have, on the other hand, also already come across several indicators of a clear drive for rupture with the old order, typically demanded by individuals who experienced the old order as an obstacle restricting a free unfolding of legitimate wishes etc., as dated, and

sometimes even as inhumane. In the period of ‘global’ Reproductionism, these disruptive tendencies represent the Potentiality component, i.e., those elements of the tripartite Potentiality-Actuality-Resultant (PAR) structure of a period that tend to destabilise Actuality, i.e., the actual state of affairs that is characterised by a tendency to stabilise itself. As the examples of Khalīl al-Khūrī, Aḥmad Midḥat, Fāris al-Shidyāq showed, such a desire for renewal and ‘updating’ to a more contemporary, ‘modern’ attitude towards life could also be virulent in authors who, in principle, believed in the innovative potential of own, autochthonous traditions and therefore advocated a prudent, moderate and modest reform, seeking to combine the best of both: of civilisation in the spirit of progress and modernity, on the one hand, and of an own, precious cultural heritage and autochthonous identity, on the other hand.

This chapter will identify *passion*, and with it *emotionalisation*, as a key element of the Potentiality component of a reproductionist aesthetic (and approach to the world), as sketched by al-Khūrī in the metatextual foreword to his *Way! Idhan lastu bi-Ifranji* and subsequently translated into the novel’s dramatic plot and tragic ending. In this *muqaddima*, the author pleads for a literature in which authenticity and logical plausibility are mingled with *hawas*, literally “frenzy”, but better rendered as “passion” here. The chapter sets out to explain how al-Khūrī’s call for an “indigenous way of life” (*wujūd ahlī*) and literary authenticity and at the same time an emotionalisation of writing may belong together. I will argue that both spring from the same source: the modern subject beginning to feel its agency in the world and seeking to assert itself. The latter wish is inherent also in the concomitant preference of drama and plot narratives over poetry; in drama and narrative prose, the subject’s agency can be observed as unfolding *in time* (cf. above, Chapter 6). The dynamisation implied in this process can be read as an indicator of temporalisation in the sense Reinhart Koselleck identified as a main feature of the European *Sattelzeit* (“threshold period”).¹ Like in this transitional period in Europe, in the Arabic Nahḍa, too, new concepts emerge and older terms acquire new meanings (as we’ve already seen on several occasions in the preceding chapters and will also notice in those to follow below). Arabic key concepts discussed in this context in this chapter include: *taqlīd*, *taṣwīr*, *ḥaqīqa*, *wujūd ahlī* (cf. above, Chapter 4), *hawas*, *istiqlāl dhātī* (see below, Chapter 16), *riwāya* (see esp. Chapter 7) and *adab / adīb* (cf. esp. Chapter 4). Additionally, emotionalisation will be discussed

¹ This chapter was first published as a contribution to a themed section of *Die Welt des Islams/The World of Islam*, 62 (2022), on the Nahḍa as a “*Sattelzeit*”, edited by Florian Zemmin and Alp Eren Topal, who also had organized a corresponding workshop in Bern in 2019.

with reference to Margrit Pernau's idea of "civilising emotions" (for more on emotions, see below, Chapters 10, 11, and 18).

* * *

9.1 Introduction

In the opening chapters of what is often labelled "the first Arabic novel"² – Khalil al-Khūrī's³ *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji* (Woe, so I am not a European then!, 1859), a hilarious satire on the detrimental effects of widespread Euromania (*tafarnu*)⁴ – the author feels urged to not only present his novel's topic and setting (Aleppo) but also to briefly discuss literary aesthetics. He does so (in chapter 3) by way of a comparison between two poems on Aleppo: one by al-Mutanabbī (915–965 CE), the icon of traditional Arab(ic) poetry, and one by the French poet Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869). Although the novel as a whole is very critical about the adoption of Western civilisation and rather pleads in favour of sticking to "the indigenous way of life" (*al-wujūd al-ahli*, 3 and *passim*)⁵, al-Khūrī nevertheless does not prefer al-Mutanabbī over Lamartine. Rather, he argues that the former is ridiculously unauthentic, artificial, almost mechanical, "dry and cruel like a rock" (*nāshif qāsī ka-l-julmūd*, 19). In contrast, the Romantic poet's verses, though not free of a ridiculously unrealistic exoticism, show what in al-Khūrī's view is essential for poetry: passion (*hawās*), and this is why they also appeal directly "to the heart" (*nafs*, lit., soul). The ideal,

² Cf., e.g., Wielandt 1980, 130, or the label *awwal riwāya 'arabiyya / al-riwāya al-'arabiyya al-ūlā* ("the first Arabic novel") attached to the text by two newer editions ('Abd al-Tawwāb 2007, Dāghir 2009), see al-Khūrī 1860 in the Bibliography. – In contrast, Stephen Sheehi still thought it was Salīm al-Bustānī's *al-Huyām fī jinān al-Shām* (Love in the Gardens of Syria), serialised in 1870 in *al-Jinān*, that "could be described as the first attempt at a novel written in Arabic" – Sheehi 2004, 78. Writing before the 'rediscovery', by the above-mentioned editors, of al-Khūrī's *Way!* (and unaware of Wielandt's study of 1980 that had already dealt with al-Khūrī's pioneering text more than two decades earlier), Sheehi consequently attributed the "attempt to produce a new form of Arabic narrative" to al-Bustānī's *al-Huyām* rather than to al-Khūrī's *Way* (*ibid.*).

³ Lebanese journalist and poet, 1836–1907. For a short CV and appreciation of his work, see, e.g., Sadgrove (1998).

⁴ For studies of the text, cf. Wielandt 1980, esp. 130–36; Guth 2003b, esp. ch. 1.1 (§§ 6–25); 'Abd al-Tawwāb, "Khalil al-Khūrī rā'idan riwā'iyyan", in al-Khūrī 1860/2007, 5–17; Dāghir, "Muqaddima", in al-Khūrī 1860/2009, 7–41; Guth 2019/20.

⁵ Inline quotations refer to the "second print" (*ṭab'a thāniya*) of the text, in book form, i.e., al-Khūrī 1860, in facsimile also in the 2007 edition – see Bibliography.

then, is a poetry in which “truth [is] mingled with passion” (*ḥaqīqa mumtazija bi-l-hawas*, 20).⁶

This study tries to locate the author’s poetological considerations on a timeline of historical development between early indications of a changing literary aesthetics in the first half of the nineteenth century and the formulation, roughly a century later, of programmatic manifestos of “national literature” (*adab qawmi*). To this purpose, I will first trace the realist aspect of al-Khūrī’s claim back to the admiration with which Arabs like R. R. al-Ṭaḥṭāwī observed the reality illusion of European theatre in the late 1820s. This will be followed by a detailed presentation of al-Khūrī’s critical assessment of al-Mutanabbi’s and Lamartine’s poems and his addition of the component of passion to that of realism. I will then show how the author translates his idea of “truth mingled with passion” into the story he tells about a Euro-fop, the detrimental consequences of his Euromania, and the corresponding need for Arab fellow-countrymen to stick to their own indigenous way of life and authentic identity. The novella will be read as a narrative exemplification of the author’s theory that allows the reading subject to ‘live through’, in the symbolic representation of factualist/reality-referenced fiction, the choices that the modern Arab subject has to make and the challenges s/he has to face in her/his meeting with European-style modernity. The subsequent section will link the emphasis with which such a dramatic emotionalisation underlines the centrality of the experiencing subject, to other contemporaneous tendencies of subjectivation, observed by earlier research, thus reading al-Khūrī’s theory as one out of a variety of phenomena that all point in the same direction and may therefore, taken together, be regarded as characteristic of the Arab(ic) Nahḍa as a *Sattelzeit*. To these features belongs also the temporalisation inherent in dramatisation/emotionalisation, an aspect that R. Koselleck identified as a key marker of the European *Sattelzeit* and that we thus can retain as a marker of the Nahḍa, too: the subject experiencing him/herself as acting in time⁷ – time that now becomes History, with a past, a present, and a future.⁸ The last section preceding my summary Conclusion will be dedicated to another role of emotionalisation, namely that of a motor of the de-

⁶ For a discussion of English translations of *hawas* and *ḥaqīqa*, see below, notes 19 and 16–17, respectively.

⁷ As, e.g., already Williams remarked, this *active* subject is “in ironic contrast with the passive subject of political dominion” – Williams 1976/1983, 310 (in entry “Subjective”).

⁸ Cf., for instance, Koselleck 1972/2011, 13, or id. 1975/1997, *passim*. – Cf. in this context also the well-known fact that “[t]he idea of history as the enactment of human self-development found its most dramatic expression in the philosophy of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel” – Bennett et al., eds. 2005, 157 (in entry “History”).

sired civilisational progress. As nineteenth-century progressivism after the turn of the century, and especially after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, finds its continuation in the ideology of the emerging nation states, al-Khūrī's introduction of the emotional component into literary theory can be regarded as foreshadowing the role emotionalism will play in literature in the second half of the century where the way is paved for the emergence of nationalism. Like in the European Sattelzeit, concomitant conceptual change will be discussed as a marker of the above processes in the Arab(ic) Nahḍa too.

9.2 A new aesthetics (I): al-Ṭaḥṭāwī admiring theatre

The aesthetics that al-Khūrī introduces to his readers both in a theoretical foreword and through the narrated story itself is only partly new, at least with regard to its realist-factualist component. It was already three decades earlier that Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801–1873), the former head of the Egyptian study mission to France, observed this realist-factualist component when he visited the theatres of Paris. The description of his impressions clearly shows his appreciation: In section 7, “On the entertainments (*muntazahāt*) of Paris”, of the third essay of his famous account of his stay in France (which lasted from 1826 to 1831),⁹ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī states that although he “do[es] not know of an Arabic word that renders the meaning of *spectacle* (*sibiktākil*) or *théâtre* (*tiyātir*)” (211/231)¹⁰ and although the performances are not free of some “Satanic leanings” (*nazaʿāt shayṭāniyya*, *ibid.*), French theatre nevertheless should be assessed as an institution with “highly beneficial virtues (*faḍāʾil ʿaẓīmat al-fāʾida*, *ibid.*)” “because people learn wonderful lessons (*ibar ʿajība*)” there (208/228). As is obvious from this remark, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī makes his judgment from the position of a traditional man of letters (*adīb*) whom his readers expect to fathom the foreign culture's potential with regard to the humanist ideal of a “refinement of morals” (*tahdhīb al-akhlāq*), and he supports it, in sober, well-balanced argumentation,¹¹ by underlining that the *spectacles* are not only jest (*hazl*), as one might think at first sight when looking at things

⁹ *Takhliṣ al-ibriz fī talkhīṣ Bārīz* (The Extraction of Gold: an Overview of Paris) (Cairo 1834).

¹⁰ Here and in the following paragraphs, inline quotations refer to the 3 vols. edn, Cairo: GEBO, 1993 (*italic* page numbers) and the English translation by Daniel Newman (2004/2011) (Roman page numbers, after the slash).

¹¹ As the title of the treatise – *Takhliṣ al-ibriz*... “Extracting the gold...” – makes clear (see fn. 9), a separation of the wheat from the chaff, i.e., a critical assessment (of French culture and civilisation), is the overall goal that al-Ṭaḥṭāwī seeks to achieve with his book.

from a traditional Arab(ic) perspective, but “actually” (*fī l-ḥaqīqa*) something very serious (*jidd*) (208/228).¹² In this remark it seems, however, that an important precondition for theatre to be able to fulfil its function of improving and refining peoples’ morals is the fact that it refers to real life and real history by “re-enact[ing] everything that has happened (*taqlīd sā’ir mā waqa’a*)” (ibid.) by way of symbolic representation (*taṣwīr*):

for instance, if they [sc. the French] want to imitate (*taqlīd*) a sultan and the things that happen to him, they convert the stage to make it *look like* [my italics – S.G.] a palace, create an image of the character (*ṣawwarū dhātahu*), recite his poetry and so on and so forth.
(209/229)

In these *spectacles*, they represent everything that exists (*yūṣawwirūna sā’ir mā yūjad*), even the parting of the sea by Moses – Peace be upon him.¹³ They represent the sea and create rolling waves so that it completely *looks like* [my italics – S.G.] the sea. One night, I saw that they ended the play [...] with a representation of a sun and its course. The light of this sun illuminated the theatre to such an extent that it outshone the chandeliers; it was *as if* [my italics – S.G.] suddenly morning had broken for people.

(210/230)

The close relation between theatrical illusion and reality let al-Ṭaḥṭāwī choose the term *taqlīd*, lit. “imitation”, to describe the basic operation of French theatre (not without specifying, however, that it is not a one-to-one reproduction of reality, i.e., of everything “that has happened” or “that exists”, but only a symbolic *as-if* or *looks-like* representation; see my italics in the above quotation).¹⁴ As I have shown elsewhere, the importance assigned to reality-reference (as opposed to detachedness, self-referentiality, mere word-play, or pure fantasy, etc.) is also evident in the choice of the old word *riwāya*, lit. “transmission” (of pieces of information), as a ‘container’ term to signify novels, novellas, theatrical pieces, operas, etc. all along the nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁵ When these genres reached the Arab World, indigenous

¹² For the underlying concepts of *jidd* and *hazl*, cf. Pellat 1957.

¹³ Explanatory note by translator D. Newman: “This is of course a reference to *Moïse en Egypte*, the famous opera by Rossini, which had its first showing in 1818, with a revised version premiering in 1827 in Paris, where the composer had settled in 1824. The opera had several seasons in Paris during al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s stay there.”

¹⁴ For al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s use of the term *taqlīd*, cf. Schulze 1994. Although it would certainly have been giving, Schulze unfortunately did not elaborate on al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s use of *taṣwīr*, i.e., giving a *ṣūra* ‘form’, shaping, forming. I suggest to read this term here in the sense of ‘to assign a form of literary representation’.

¹⁵ Cf. my study on the semantic history of *riwāya*, Guth 2011 (= Chapter 7 of the present volume).

aesthetics evidently did not see a need to differentiate among them according to the specificity of each of them; what mattered most was that all shared the character of report-like accounts referring to the real world.¹⁶ Quite significantly, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī compares the representation of the real world in theatre to the work of scientists, or scholars:

One of the amazing things [*al-‘ajā‘ib*] is that during their performance, they raise issues related to foreign sciences [*masā’il min al-‘ulūm al-gharība*] and difficult questions [*al-masā’il al-mushkila*], which they deal with in depth at the same time [*yata‘ammaqūna*]. They do this so convincingly that you would think them scholars [*‘ulamā’*]. Even the small boys that play refer to important notions from the natural sciences, etc.

(209/230-1)

9.3 A new aesthetics (II): al-Khūrī introducing “passion”

A generation century later, Khalīl al-Khūrī adds a new dimension. For him, good literature should be characterised not only by its realism but also, as we shall soon see, by its emotionalism. The new aesthetics is for the first time developed in the “Introduction” (*muqaddima*) to his *Way, idhan lastu bi-l-franjī*, which not only introduces the setting and topic of the ensuing novella but also serves as a brief treatise on literary criticism. In it, al-Khūrī undertakes a comparison between the poetry of two icons of their respective literary cultures, one by Abū l-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, representative of the indigenous Eastern, classical Arab(ic) tradition, and one by Alphonse de Lamartine, representative of contemporary Western poetic art. The first and foremost defect that al-Khūrī criticises in both of them is their detachment from reality, lack of authenticity, and logical plausibility. Although al-Mutanabbī has lived in Aleppo for many years, al-Khūrī says, he did not mention the city except for in “a few instances where the [need to find a suitable] rhyme compelled him to do so” (*Way*, 17). Furthermore, al-Khūrī finds quite a few of al-Mutanabbī’s verses contradictory in themselves, defying logic and common sense for the sake of exquisite expression and witty wordplay – in fact, “nothing but noise in the air” (*ḍajij yataṭāyar fī l-hawā’*, 18), “mere frenzy talk from which you cannot get an idea [*lit.*, smell the scent] of the *adab*-related facts/reality/truth” (*lā tashumm fīhī rā’iḥat al-ḥaqā’iq al-adabiyya*,

¹⁶ Cf. ch. I.2.1 “*ḥaqīqa* – Faktizität und Wahrheit als Leitlinie der neuen Prosa”, in Al-Bagdadi 2010, 41–50. – The emphasis on reality-reference is also the reason why al-Ṭaḥṭāwī does not distinguish between theatrical plays and operas and why I will allow myself, in the present article, to compare his observations on the *spectacles* of Paris to al-Khūrī’s discussion of poetry and, at the same time, take these as valid for prose fiction too. – See also below, p. 227 with fn. 51.

18).¹⁷ On the other side, while al-Mutanabbī has lived in Aleppo almost without composing any poetry about the city, Lamartine has written his poem, “À une jeune Arabe Qui fumait le Narguilé dans un jardin d’Alep” (Lamartine [1832]), without ever having been there, unrealistically and ridiculously exoticising the ‘Orient’ in it, to the extent that “anyone of an Eastern taste (*dhawq*)¹⁸ cannot help but feel disgusted (*lā yatamālak nafsahū ‘an il-nufūr*).” In contrast, good poetry – and we may well say: literature in general, since al-Khūrī applies the principle (as we shall soon see below) to his own novella, which is in prose – should in any case always be authentic and take reality as its “starting point” (*mabda’*, 18), its basis, or point of reference.

Reality-reference and authentic, realistic representation, however, are not enough any longer for al-Khūrī. Unlike al-Ṭaḥṭāwī who had approached the aesthetics of the French *spectacles* from a soberly arguing moralist perspective that contented itself with referentialism, al-Khūrī now also demands that in good literature, authenticity and realism should be combined with “passion” (*hawas*) and an appeal to the reader’s/spectator’s “heart” (*nafs*, lit., soul). Thus, literature should be an expression of “truth mingled with passion” (*ḥaqīqa mumtazija bi-l-hawas*, 20) and should engage the reader/spectator emotionally.

Peter Hill (2017, 407) translated *hawas* as “foolishness”, a semantic value that the word certainly *can* take also in al-Khūrī’s text (see above, p. 218, where I rendered his *hawas maḥḍ* as “mere frenzy”). However, given that, in the phrase under discussion here, the word is contrasted to the “dry seriousness” (*jidd nāshif*, 19) of artificial poetry that does not appeal to the *heart*, “passion” seems to be the more appropriate rendering, as “foolishness” would hardly be relatable to the

17 As often in nineteenth century Arabic, terminology is difficult to render exactly here (cf. also below, p. 220 cum fn. 21, with remarks on semantic volatility as characteristic of the Na-ḥḍa). Like many other terms, both *ḥaqīqa* (incl. its plural *ḥaqā’iq*) and *adab* cover a wide range of meanings so that the proper English equivalent is difficult to grasp. In many cases, as probably here, the meaning remains ambiguous. Al-Bagdadi renders *ḥaqīqa* with “Faktizität und Wahrheit” (2010, passim). In the literary ‘manifesto’ of 1921 with a quotation from which I will conclude this article/chapter, English *realism* (or French *réalisme*) is transliterated (as «الرياليسم» *al-riyālism*) and translated as *madhhab al-ḥaqā’iq*, i.e., ‘the factualist approach’ or ‘the school of facts/truths’ – see p. 234 with fn. 79, below. – In a similar vein, the f. adjective *adabiyya*, used as attribute of *ḥaqā’iq* here, means more than just “literary” (as one would understand it today), as *adab* also means “politeness; morals; civilisation, civility, culture; humanism”, cf. my study Guth 2010b.

18 Perhaps one should even render *dhawq* as “sensibility” here – cf. al-Tahānawī’s explanation of the meaning of *dhawq* in the use of “the eloquent ones” (*al-bulaghā’*) as *muḥarrik al-qulūb wa-l-bā’ith ‘alā l-wajd*. Al-Tahānawī 1854/62 [1996, s.v.

semantic fields of ‘dry/wet, juicy’ and ‘heart/soul, emotion’.¹⁹ *Hawas*, then, seems to be, like *ḥaqīqa*,²⁰ one of the many ‘Janus-faced’ terms that are so typical of the lexicon of the Nahḍa, this *Sattelzeit* that, like its European counterpart, is characterised by large-scale conceptual change and the semantic ‘volatility’ of many terms: rooted in traditional, ‘classical’ usage, they often acquire new meanings.²¹ – My rendering, in the present context, of *hawas* as “passion” is also encouraged by Pernau’s finding (for Urdu and a later period though, but the cases seem to be typologically comparable), that, in the climate of early nationalism, a new demand for passion can be observed (cf. chapter “II. Das Verlangen nach Leidenschaft – Gefühle in der Moderne”, Pernau 2018, 68 ff.) ; to this corresponds a reconfiguration of the emotional vocabulary (“Rekonfiguration des Emotionsvokabulars”, *ibid.*: 76), where Urdu *jazbat* (an originally mystical term signifying the adept’s – passive – “being drawn” to God) began to take the positive value of “passion” in the course of the re-evaluation of nature as something positive, opposed to artificiality. Instead of balance and harmony, exuberance and passion became the new ideals (*ibid.*: 70). Given that also al-Khūrī’s text is written on the threshold of inventing a national culture²² (cf. his emphasis on the need to stick to the “indigenous way of life” and his praise of “Oriental/Eastern” virtues),²³ the shift in the meaning of *hawas* from a rather negative “foolishness, mania, obses-

19 Given Freytag’s “Amentiae pars aliqua” (vol. iv, 1837) and Lane’s “Somewhat of madness, or insanity, or diabolical possession” (vol. viii, 1893) as the primary values of *hawas*, “foolishness” seems to be the original meaning and “passion” therefore probably secondary. Note, however, the fact that quite a few nineteenth-century dictionaries give “passion, mania, obsession” as the word’s *first* values, cf., e.g., Kazimirski 1860: “désir ardent, passion, manie de...”, or Wahrmund 1887: “leidenschaftliche Begierde, Passion; Manie; Ehrsucht; Lust, Vergnügen, Unterhaltung; Thorheit, Tollheit; [*mod.*] Leichtsinn”.

20 See above, fn. 17.

21 For the phenomenon in general, cf. Koselleck 1972/2011, xiii–xxvii, 7–25. – For the Nahḍa as a period of terminological and semantic transition, cf. Zemmin 2018, esp. 177–84; see also below, p. 225, and (for *Verzeitlichung* “temporalisation” as the underlying factor) p. 228. – For some examples of other socio-political and cultural terminology being ‘re-activated’ by intellectuals of the period, see, for instance, Abu-’Uksa 2019, esp. 6 ff., on the old/new *tamaddun*, or my own studies on *adab* and *riwāya*, Guth 2010b and Guth 2011 (↗ Chapter 7), respectively. Semantic extension of the meaning of existing words is one of the five default methods with the help of which the need for new vocabulary was – and is still – met in Arabic, the other four being direct borrowing; integration of the foreign word morphologically and/or phonologically; analogical extension of an existing root; and translation of the foreign word, i.e., calquing – see Versteegh 1997, 179; on the shaping of Modern Standard Arabic in general, see the classic studies by Monteil 1960, Stetkevych 1970, Rebhan 1986, and Lewis 1988.

22 As I have argued elsewhere, cf. Guth 2019/20.

23 See below, p. 231 with fn. 71.

sion” to the more positive “passion” in al-Khūrī’s *Way* may perhaps be seen in line with Pernau’s observation that, in India, the development of passionate feelings came to be a precondition in a nation to be able to shape its future, or even to survive (Pernau 2018, 56).

According to al-Khūrī, a way for an author to achieve the desired combination of realism and emotional engagement on the side of the reader is to try to “make people feel what he himself feels” (*ja‘ala l-nās tuḥiss bi-mā yuḥiss bihī huwa nafsuhū*, 20), even if this means that the poet becomes like a “drunkard” (*sakrān*) – emotional exuberance (which a scholar like al-Ṭaḥṭāwī would certainly have rejected) is perfectly fine, and even desirable, for al-Khūrī, as long as the author remains authentic and expresses the truth (*yatakallam bi-l-ḥaqīqa*, *ibid.*). In the critical comparison between al-Mutanabbī and Lamartine along which the author develops his aesthetics, the Arab poet comes off much worse than the French romanticist in this respect. According to al-Khūrī, al-Mutanabbī’s verses neither speak *from* the heart nor *to* the heart, they speak of a “seriousness [that is as] dry and cruel as a giant rock (*jidd nāshif qāṣi ka-l-julmūd*)” (19). In contrast, Lamartine, his Orientalist exoticising notwithstanding, is “passionate” from the very beginning:

Qui ? toi ? me demander l’encens de poésie ?
Toi, fille d’Orient, née aux vents du désert !
Fleur des jardins d’Alep, que Bulbul eût choisie
Pour languir et chanter sur son calice ouvert !

From the very first lines, the voice of the lyrical subject is very strongly felt in this poem, and this is mainly due to the highly emotional character of the opening – cf. the many interrogation and question marks, and the elliptical nature of all the phrases in the whole stanza. While al-Khūrī quotes only four verses of al-Mutanabbī’s poem he takes the pain to render more than half of Lamartine’s long poem into Arabic – and not any Arabic, but beautiful *ṭawīl* verses.²⁴ The same repletion with emotions and passion was probably the reason for the previously mentioned al-Ṭaḥṭāwī to decide, the very same year al-Khūrī published his *Way*, to render the French author Fénelon’s *Les aventures de Télémaque* into Arabic, significantly in beautifully embellished, ornate rhyme-prose.²⁵

²⁴ The metre *ṭawīl* (most common subtype: ◡ – ◡ | ◡ – – – | ◡ – ◡ | ◡ – ◡ – , in both hemistiches) can be counted among the more prestigious ones, used predominantly in ancient Arabic poetry – Stoetzer 2012.

²⁵ At the same time, the subtitle of the Arabic ‘translation’ underlined the referentiality of the content: ... *fī waqā‘i Tilmāk* “... What Happened [!] to Telemachus”.

9.4 Applying the new aesthetic theory: al-Khūrī's novella

Following the introduction, al-Khūrī sets out to translate his new ideal of a literature in which “truth [is] mingled with passion” into the story that forms the main body of the work. On the one hand, the author here acts as a sober, rationalist, scientist-like observer and analyst who is interested in the facts of contemporary reality: the topic of the novella – the widespread ignorant imitation of Western habits and fashion (*tafarnuj*)²⁶ and its dangerous consequences – is taken from contemporary everyday life where it is felt to be an increasingly urgent issue;²⁷ the characters are ‘real’ characters, and the setting is ‘real’;²⁸ and the perspective from which the author-narrator looks into these matters, the “truth/facts” (*ḥaqīqa*, pl. *ḥaqā’iq*), is that of a distanced, heterodiegetic²⁹ third-person narrator who at any moment can come in with explanations, background information and critical comments and thus displays the habitus of the scholar, scientist (*‘ālim*) and man of letters (*adīb*) who also is in the position to pass moral judgments, a habitus we know from al-Ṭaḥṭāwī and his assessment of the moral-improving, civilising potential of the French *spectacles*. – On the other hand, the narrator is not only the ‘cool’ rationalist-moralist intellectual but also somebody who uses his omniscience to grant the reader insight into the thoughts and feelings of the main characters (inside perspective, personal style), lets us participate in the challenges they meet, the expectations they have, the suspicions they are troubled by, the conflicts they have to master, the choices they are forced to make, their motivations, feelings, thoughts, etc. And, unlike al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, al-Khūrī does not content himself with the theoretical dis-

26 According to Lewis 1998/2012c, al-Khūrī's novel is the earliest text in Arabic featuring the term *tafarnuj* (but it may be older). In any case, it is derived from *ifranj*, the ‘Franks’, i.e., Europeans. Hill 2017, 407, renders *tafarnuj* by “excessive Frankification”.

27 Cf. al-Khūrī's description of contemporary Beirut as a city that “has changed stupendously in many respects within only a few years” (8).

28 The author is eager to underline that the events that he is going to report about actually happened while he was in Aleppo. Although he did not know the main character himself, his story can claim authenticity nevertheless as it is based on the first-hand report (*rawā-hā*) he got “yesterday evening” (*laylata ams*) from one of Mikhālī's “relatives” (*aqārib*) (46).

29 Given that the narrator claims to have been in Aleppo himself while the events took place and that he got the story from one of Mikhālī's relatives, his position is not completely outside the diegesis, i.e., the narrated world. However, while the narrator figures in person in the framing narrative, where he is part of the setting, he remains completely absent from the embedded main story itself and, thus, heterodiegetic with regard to the Mikhālī plot. – For the types of diegesis and narrators, cf., e.g., the concise overview in Martínez and Scheffel 2007, 80–84 (= ch. II.3.c on narrative voice and the relation between narrator and narrated world).

course but sets out to exemplify in practice the issues dealt with in the introduction in that he tells the story that forms the main body of his text:

The principal character of this story, Mikhālī, is a well-off merchant from Aleppo who thinks of himself as a European, superior to his Arab-Oriental fellow countrymen, and therefore also does not want to give his daughter, Émilie,³⁰ to his wife's cousin, As'ad, although he is a decent and virtuous young man from an honorable family with whom Émilie is in love. In his class conceit-like arrogance, Mikhālī regards As'ad as a 'barbarian' and plans to give Émilie to a Frenchman named Edmond who – allegedly – is of aristocratic descent. For quite a while, Edmond plays the game, because he is charmed by beautiful Émilie and lives a comfortable life as Mikhālī's guest. Soon, however, it turns out that 'count' (*comte*) Edmond is nothing but a waiter who fled from France in order to avoid prosecution for a crime he has committed. But when this truth is revealed (and Mikhālī has to realise that he has been fooled and that he has to blame himself for this³¹) it is already too late: after some initial scruples, Émilie has abandoned her earlier fiancé and instead granted her favour to the Frenchman. For some time she tries to win back As'ad whose faithfulness she had betrayed. But As'ad is clever enough to see through the game and turns away from her, deeply hurt in his feelings. On this, Émilie, full of remorse and as a broken woman, decides to become a nun.³²

It is clear already from this summary that the topic of *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji* – the dangers of 'Euromania' and neglecting one's proper, indigenous identity – is treated here not through reasoning analysis, soberly weighing the pros against the cons, but with the help of a highly dramatic enactment, a combination of derision (of Mikhālī's ignorance and arrogance) and tragedy in which the main purpose of the text, the teaching of a moral lesson that is beneficial for society, is achieved not through logical argument but through an interplay of emotions: love, pride, arrogance, hope, suspicion, disappointment, honour, disgrace, shame, remorse, ... The reader is shown these emotions 'as if'³³ they were real *in the characters*, and for the moral lesson to be learnt, the author also counts on the emotional engagement of the *readers*³⁴ – a consequent translation

³⁰ On this name, cf. below, note 72.

³¹ It is at this moment that Mikhālī exclaims "Woe, so I am not a European then!", i.e., the utterance that al-Khūrī chose as the title for the whole text.

³² This summary is a concise version of the one given in Guth 2019, 314.

³³ The *as-if* illusion is also underlined by al-Khūrī's eagerness to present the narrated world as though in theatre. The author even asks his readers to imagine themselves wearing a cap of invisibility and then takes them to Mikhālī's room, showing them around and subsequently letting them overhear, quasi in the room itself, a conversation between Mikhālī and his wife. Moreover, the conversation is then rendered *verbatim*, like a dialogue in theatre (34).

³⁴ It is significant for this first piece of 'modern' Arabic literature that the author still feels the need to supplement the story told with a theoretical frame (in the introduction and afterword) where the moral lesson is made *explicit*, i.e., the meaning of fiction is explained through non-

of the claim, made in the introduction, that an author should make the readers *feel* what he or, we may well add, other acting characters, feel (*com*-passion).³⁵

9.5 Framing al-Khūrī's new aesthetics (I): The subject's agency

Why did al-Khūrī – and so many after him – choose to treat a current socio-cultural problem with a recourse to prose fiction rather than stick to the hitherto available genres? Why did he not content himself with a more elaborate version of his introduction and afterword, or some poems? I am convinced that the reason for his choice lies in the increased relevance of the *subject* and its *agency* and a wish to *assert the self* as such a subject with its own agency.

An awareness of the subject's agency in the world and a tendency to underline this also in one's writings can be observed already before the nineteenth century, or even earlier. This has been shown, not least, in a collection of studies edited by Ralf Elger and Yavuz Köse on Middle Eastern "ego documents".³⁶ I would argue, however, that the full and final break-through of this awareness and desire does not come before the mid-nineteenth century,³⁷ clearly observable, for instance, in significant changes in traditional genres, but mostly, and much more virulently and better visibly so, in the new genres – which in this way become key indicators of modernity. Given that genres are concepts, this process is without doubt comparable to the large-scale and profound conceptual change that made Reinhart Koselleck posit, in the European context, "the emergence of a threshold period (*Sattelzeit*)" from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards (Koselleck 1972/2011, 9).

fiction. It is as if the author, standing at the threshold to a new aesthetics, the point of transition from traditional to modern *adab*, still does not have enough confidence in the efficiency of fiction and its *implicit*, indirect ways of influencing the readers' minds; therefore he still feels the need to frame the story with discussion in the style of a theoretical treatise (*risāla*). – On account of this dual character of *Way*, Mārūn 'Abbūd, in his characterisation of the literary production of early Nahḍa writers, would probably have grouped the work among what he labels *kutub takād takūn qīṣṣa*, or 'almost-novels,' as Tomiche 2012 renders the expression (referring to 'Abbūd, *Ruwwād al-nahḍa al-ḥadītha*, 2nd edn, Beirut 1966, 131).

³⁵ Cf. Al-Bagdadi's remarks on the embodying function of the metaphor of the "mirror of thoughts" (*mir'āt al-afkār*) with which the Lebanese woman writer Zaynab Fawwāz identifies the novel – Al-Bagdadi 1999b, 7 ff.

³⁶ Elger and Köse, eds. 2010.

³⁷ Cf. Al-Bagdadi who locates the major "anthropological turn" that she observes in her article, in writings by Arab authors "from the 1850s until the end of the century" – Al-Bagdadi 1999a, 4.

With regard to changes in traditional genres, I have demonstrated, for example, how Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq, in one of the *maqāmāt*³⁸ contained in his famous *al-Sāq 'alā l-sāq fī-mā huwa l-Fāryāq*³⁹ (1855), exhibits a shift of focus from the traditional trickster to the narrating subject.⁴⁰ As a matter of course, the same importance of the narrating subject also speaks from the fact that al-Shidyāq wrote this text – which in earlier times would have been an ensemble of travelogues, poetry, and treatises on all kinds of topics – as an autobiography with fictional elements (or fiction with autobiographical elements)⁴¹ and that the main purpose of the book, according to its subtitle, is nothing less than a critical assessment, by the author/al-Fāryāq himself, of the world around him as the object of this assessment.⁴² The same type of critical, superior, self-confident subject – the prototype of the modern Arab public *intellectual* – is speaking also in al-Khūrī's omnipresent auctorial first-person narrator in *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji*, a narrator who intervenes to explain, comment, contemplate, evaluate, deride.⁴³ While this narrator is, as we saw, primarily an instance of the subject's *reasoning*, emphasising the *adīb*'s role and capacity to discern and pass critical judgments about the truths of empirical, objective reality, the self-assertion of

38 The *maqāma* (pl. *-āt*) genre of Arabic literature was 'invented' by "Badi' al-zamān" al-Hama-dhānī in the tenth century. Its main formal features are the use of rhyme-prose (*saj'*) and witty wordplay, often paronomasy. The plot of a typical *maqāma* is centered round a *pícaro*-like trickster whose story is told by a first-person narrator ("When I was in the city of X, ...") who, as a rule, eye-witnessed the events, but only at the very end recognises who the *pícaro* actually was.

39 For a translation of the various elements of the title (and a longer subtitle), see below, notes 41, 42, 43.

40 See my study "Even in a *maqāma*!", Guth 2010b = Chapter 8 in this volume.

41 Cf. the second part of the full title, *...fī-mā huwa l-Fāryāq* "on who the Faryaq is", where the name of the text's protagonist, al-Fāryāq, is easily recognisable as composed of the author's own names (FĀRis al-ShidYĀQ) and is thus a hint, from the beginning, at who will be the main hero of the book.

42 The subtitle reads *Ayyām wa-shuhūr wa-a'wām fī 'ajm al-'arab wa-l-a'jām*, i.e., literally, "Days, months, and years [spent in] putting Arabs and non-Arabs to the critical test", where the key word is *'ajm*, lit. 'to bite on a coin in order to know if it is genuine,' rendered by al-Shidyāq himself into French on the cover as "observations critiques".

43 Satire is one of the most salient modes for the intellectual subject to accentuate his superior critical stance *vis-à-vis* conventions and to underline the freedom and independence of his thinking. The superior habitus is expressed by al-Shidyāq already in the relaxed posture of "leg over leg" (*al-sāq 'alā l-sāq*) that the author even makes into the main title of his work. In al-Khūrī's *Way*, we can observe it, for instance, in the gesture to let a brief "Introduction to the introduction" (*muqaddimat al-muqaddima*, 2) precede the introductory chapters, and a "Conclusion to the conclusion" (*Khātimat al-khātima*, 162–63) follow his final remarks. – On satire in other contexts (derision of the fellaheen), see Selim 2004, ch. 1 ("The Garrulous Peasant").

the newly emerging secular-minded⁴⁴ bourgeoisie, the *efendiyya*,⁴⁵ is increasingly expressed, from the 1870s onwards,⁴⁶ through lachrymose sentimentalism.⁴⁷ The feeling subject that comes in addition to the intellectual, reasoning subject⁴⁸ is a phenomenon that is well-known also from European literary history where the emancipation of the newly emerged bourgeois class of the eighteenth century, the *troisième état*, was accompanied in literature by a similar emphasis on the reasoning subject (cf. Enlightenment) and a flood of tears (cf. the Age of Sensibility).⁴⁹ While the new class had already gained a considerable degree of

44 Often educated in institutions of the non-Islamic, more worldly-oriented track of learning (military, naval, medical academies, engineering and administrative training colleges, law and economy schools, etc.) and/or foreign missionary schools and/or in Europe, this group of ‘engineers’ (as I like to call them) had a pragmatic, almost ‘mechanistic’, positivist-scientist attitude towards their own society – for them, it was a *hay’a*, a “structure” that could be analysed, dissected, repaired – and welcomed the curbing of the traditionally strong influence of religious institutions on worldly affairs by the state; cf. Flores 2003, 225–28 (ch. “Säkularismus”), esp. 226.

45 For the *efendiyya*, cf. Ryzova 2014.

46 Beginning with the melodramatic “social romances” of Salīm al-Bustānī (1846–1884) or Nu‘mān al-Qasāṭīlī (1854–1920) in Lebanon, the flood of tears found its apogee in the often highly sentimental plots of Jurjī Zaydān’s (1861–1914) historical novels and particularly before WWI in the writings of Muṣṭafā Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī (1876–1924) and Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān (1883–1931). – On the flood of tears, cf. my own study, Guth 1997, with further references.

47 Traditionally, melodramatic tendencies in early novels are explained, at least partly, as due to the fact that the new reading public consisted to “a relatively high percentage of women, who had a particular liking for romantic literature” and benefitted from “a proliferation of works characterised by eponymous heroines and serialised romances” – Tomiche 2012. This may be true; but the reasons for emotionalisation go certainly deeper than that – and are definitively not limited to a female audience/readership.

48 Cf. Al-Bagdadi’s observation that the “sensual perception of the soul” is now gaining “priority [...] over the intellect, [...] experience over dogma, [...] change over the normative. This preference, however, was not, as in later romantic movements, an absolute rejection or dismissal of the intellect, of dogma, and of the norm [...]”; rather, they came in addition to the latter, a process that resulted in the re-distribution of the tasks of these elements – Al-Bagdadi 1999a, 10–11.

49 Cf. the genre of the bourgeois drama (*Bürgerliches Trauerspiel*), in which the newly emerged bourgeoisie no longer was the object of ridicule (as in pre-18th century literature) but was regarded, for the first time, worthy of tragedy, i.e., participating in a genre that until then had remained the upper classes’ exclusive domain, due to the theory of *Fallhöhe* and the *Ständeklausel* (estates-clause) of Classicist French drama, according to which only people of high social rank, i.e., kings and nobility, could experience a fall so deep that it was worth tragedy. In contrast, lower and middle classes until then only appeared in comedies. – Tears were also characteristic of German *Empfindsamkeit* and *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) or the English sentimental novel, or novel of sensibility, all phenomena connected to the self-assertion of the new middle class.

self-confidence and self-esteem, they had still remained impotent on the political level, so that the nobility of the sensible, feeling heart came as a compensation of a nobility of blood, i.e., noble descent.⁵⁰ – Another indication of the increased attention paid to the human subject and its agency in the Middle East is certainly also the steadily growing demand, observable from the middle of the nineteenth century, for fiction and scenic art, in the (mostly French) original as well as in translation/adaptation and indigenous production.⁵¹ These genres not only underline, by their being products of human imagination and phantasy, the subject's agency, but they also could serve, as we have seen above, in the safe *as-if* mode of fictional/dramatic representation, as 'laboratories' of the subject's agency in the world, as sites of observing and testing out this agency⁵² – an agency that was felt to matter more and more, on several levels: that of the individual human being who came into sight as an agent in the world the more the secularisation process⁵³ advanced; that of the *efendiyya* bourgeois middle-

⁵⁰ I owe this idea to my former teacher of Modern German Literature at the University of Bonn, Peter Pütz, who developed it in, among other books, his seminal study on G.E. Lessing (Pütz 1986).

⁵¹ The first novels to be translated into Arabic seem to have been Fénelon's *Les aventures de Télémaque* and J.-F. Marmontel's *Bélisaire* (manuscripts extant from the 1810s) as well as J. Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (first translated 1834) and D. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (manuscript versions predating the first printed translation published 1835 in Malta). [Thank you, Peter Hill, for updating me on recent research here!] These were followed by al-Shidyāq's semi-fictional *al-Sāq 'alā l-sāq* (1855) and al-Khūrī's *Way* (1859) as well as al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's first rendering of Fénelon's *Les aventures de Télémaque* (1859, printed 1867). From the 1860s onwards, translation/adaptation and own production exploded (cf., e.g., Moosa 1997, chs. 5, 7-8). Alongside with fiction, theatre activity expanded steadily after the Lebanese Mārūn al-Naqqāsh (d. 1855) had first staged, in 1847, in his own house, an adaptation of Molière's *L'avare* (versified, and as an opera! – Moosa 1997, 27) and when the enthusiasm for theatre had then swept over to Egypt after many Lebanese-Syrians had decided to move to the country on the Nile after they had encountered various political, social, and religious obstacles in their home countries (cf. *ibid.*, chs. 2-3). In Egypt, the khedive ('vice-king') had already commissioned Verdi's *Aida* (= Arabic 'Ā'ida) for the opening of the Suez Canal in 1871. (For the lack of distinction in the perception of reality-referenced genres – fiction, theatre, opera – see above, p. 217 with fns. 15 and 16, as well as Chapter 7 in the present volume; the same lack of distinction facilitated also, e.g., S. al-Bustānī's turning *Télémaque* into a musical drama in 1869).

⁵² Cf. Al-Bagdadi who underlines the importance of *experiencing* the world as a key marker of the "anthropological turn" she observes in the second half of the nineteenth century: in her view, authors of the period "vigorously sought to create literature as a specific sphere of an *Erfahrungswissenschaft*, to use Kant's expression" – Al-Bagdadi 1999a, 10.

⁵³ By 'secularisation' I mean the processes that increasingly questioned the traditional dominance of religious institutions over politics and intellectual life ("institutionell abgesicherte Dominanz der Religion über Politik und Geistesleben", Flores 2003, 226) and instead favoured the autonomy of human life and its independence from such dominance (*ibid.*). – Cf. also fn. 44, above.

class who had grown since the beginning of the nineteenth century and was now striving for more influence in society; and on the political level where Western cultural hegemony and political intervention (colonialism, political balance after the Crimean War) made the Middle Eastern proto-nation states aware of a need of self-awareness and self-confidence as independent *political* subjects with their own agency.⁵⁴

9.6 Framing al-Khūrī's new aesthetics (II): Processuality and temporalisation

In all that, the aspect of moral usefulness that had been al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's ultimate criterion in his assessment of the value of the French *spectacles* remains prominent, both in al-Khūrī's *Way* and throughout the whole century – political structures remained undemocratic, so the new middle class still stuck to *their* criteria of distinction and nobility: not only the feeling heart (see above), but also morality.⁵⁵ However, the emotionalisation of narrative discourse that came in addition to its rationality and referentiality (facts, truth, authenticity, logical plausibility, etc.) not only brought the subject and its agency to the fore, but simultaneously underlined the *processuality* of the subject's experiencing the world and acting in it.

Subjectivation is thus complemented by *temporalisation*, a process that Reinhard Koselleck identified as a key aspect of the European *Sattelzeit*⁵⁶ and that we now can confirm to be a key feature of the Arab(ic) Nahḍa, too, which therefore can be posited, as a similar central “heuristic presupposition (*heuristischer Vorgriff*)” (Koselleck 1972/2011, 9) guiding our research, as such a threshold period. It is particularly in the new genres that we encounter *plots*, i.e., processes, developments that happen gradually, *in time*, and in this way again underline the sub-

⁵⁴ Cf. the fact that al-Khūrī, in his introduction to *Way*, parallels the call for poetical authenticity and “independence of the self” with an emphasis on the need to remain culturally authentic – which corresponds to the need to assert oneself in the political arena.

⁵⁵ On the importance of usefulness for the new reading public, cf., e.g., Holt 2009, 43 ff., Al-Bagdadi 2010, 24–31 (ch. I.1), or Guth 2003b, §§79b and 81b, all with further references.

⁵⁶ Cf., for instance, Koselleck 1982, or, in more detail, Koselleck 2000. – While I am ‘deducing’ temporalisation from emotionalisation here, Koselleck approached the complex from the other end when he noticed that “the introduction of a temporal dimension (*Verzeitlichung*) into categories of meaning” also meant that “[o]utmoded themes (*topoi*) now [i.e., in the *Sattelzeit*] became emotively charged” – Koselleck 1972/2011, 11.

ject's agency: the subject effects changes from a 'before' to an 'after',⁵⁷ and the reader/spectator⁵⁸ can observe 'live' how the subject's agency influences the course of events, i.e., (narrated) history.⁵⁹ Fiction and drama thus allow the reader/spectator to observe and re-live, in an *as-if* constellation, processes of internalisation of modernity by the acting subject in its confrontation with the challenges of the world, a world that is no longer static but can be improved, reformed, by the subject acting in it.⁶⁰ This is neither possible in the discursive prose of, say, newspaper articles (mainly the domain of the *intellectual* subject) nor in traditional poetry which, due to its "molecularity",⁶¹ focuses on the 'frozen' moment rather than on change in time (poems usually do not have a plot). I would argue that, alongside with the spread of the private printing press – an important material aspect that has already been described and studied in detail elsewhere⁶² – tem-

57 Cf. Tomiche 2012, who notices that the new, Western-type texts, "are distinguished [...] by a progression of the action towards a climax and a conclusion".

58 It is highly significant in this context that al-Khūrī often asks his readers to imagine a scene as if they were observing it on stage or 'live'; cf., e.g., "[anybody] arriving [nowadays] in glorious Beirut may think he is entering a huge theatre (*marsaḥ*)" – al-Khūrī 1860, 5; "Here we are, dear reader, arrived today at the Sirwardī (?) gate, so have a look with your own eyes at Glorious Aleppo in its entirety (*fa-ḥamliq bi-a'yūnika... bi-wajh al-ijmāl*)" – *ibid.*, 16; "In order to alleviate for our reader the troubles of investigation/observation (*kulfat al-faḥṣ*) let us now jump with him [...], with the help of a literary move (*bi-wathba adabiyya*), to a place close to Mikhālī's house, so that he may intrude himself, invisible thanks to a magic hood (*muta'ammim*^{am} *bi-qubba'at al-akhfā*), and we may overhear the conversation going on between the owner of the house and his wife. He [the disguised reader] will so see (*yushāhid*, i.e., become an eye witness, *shāhid*), first, an unusually small square room [...]" – *ibid.*, 34. All these excerpts speak of the author's eagerness to create in the reader the illusion that s/he is part of, and/or witness to, the narrated scenes, as if real life was happening in front of his/her eyes. – On scenic elements in this and other early novels in general, cf. Guth 2003b, 44–45 (§ 24b) and 105 (§ 52d).

59 Among other types of writing, this is particularly evident in *utopian* prose, for which the same stages of development as in European utopian fiction (utopia of place > subjectivised utopia > temporalised utopia) can be observed during the Nahḍa; cf. Guth 2021a (= Chapter 17).

60 For the notion of *perfectibilité*, cf. Koselleck 1975/1997, 17–18 and *id.* 1982, *passim*, as well as, inspired by Koselleck, Guth 2021a / Chapter 17.

61 In poetry, one verse (line) usually equals one syntactic unit, and also one idea. This is why traditional Arabic literary criticism typically praised as "beautiful" only individual verses, not whole poems. Cf., for instance, Wolfart Heinrichs' ideas on the 'molecularity' of classical Arabic poetry (sketched, e.g., in Heinrichs 1974) or Benedikt Reinert's illuminating description of the *conchetto* style in classical Islamic literatures (Reinert 1990).

62 Cf., Ayalon 1995, esp. chs. I.2 ("Enthusiastic Beginnings: The Private Press") and II.8 ("The Press as Merchandise and as Enterprise"). – For the wider perspective (print capitalism, the novel, imagining the nation, etc.), cf. Anderson 1983. For the link between economic and literary history in the Levant and Egypt, cf. Holt 2017.

poralisation is *the* main reason for narrative prose and theatre to emerge in the mid-nineteenth century Middle Eastern literary scene⁶³ and gradually ‘take the lead’ after poetry had been the main literary genre.

9.7 Framing al-Khūrī’s new aesthetics (III): Virtues, vices, and civilising emotions

What is more, the emotionalisation and concomitant temporalisation of narrative discourse also allow for the conscious functionalisation of this discourse by the Nahḍawī writer for the envisaged project of modernity and process of civilisation, i.e., the reform of society that the intellectual and ‘social engineer’ feels he is called to work for. The new genres (novel, theatre, opera) are at the “interface between emotion and civilisation”⁶⁴ and thus become a site of “civilising emotions”, i.e., emotions that are believed to serve (or obstruct) civilisatory/moral progress.⁶⁵ Margrit Pernau has observed a change in the emotional lexicon of Urdu that is closely related to the nation building process in the Urdu-speaking regions. She identified *passion* as a ‘modern’ emotion of particular importance in the socio-political and cultural context she studied.⁶⁶ My assumption is that a comparable change in the emotional vocabulary also happened in Arabic,⁶⁷ all the more so since the new genres, as is well-known, were instrumentalised from the very beginning to serve the didactic function of teaching beneficial moral lessons.⁶⁸ The interplay between moral discourse and emotionalisation is more than obvious already in al-Khūrī’s *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji*.⁶⁹ In the field of tension between

⁶³ Cf., however, also the importance of speed and the centrality of suspense as well as the link between time and money highlighted by Holt 2009 and Holt 2017.

⁶⁴ Pernau and Jordheim 2015, 3.

⁶⁵ Cf., among many other titles, Pernau et al., eds. 2015. – See also the seminal collection of articles on *Adab and Modernity: a ‘Civilising Process?’*, procured by Mayeur-Jaouen, ed. 2019, esp. Part 3 “Education and Emotions in the ‘Civilising Process’ in the Middle East” (pp. 349 ff.). – For the valorisation of actions/practices with emotion and the idea of ‘moral economies’, cf. Boddice 2018, 194 ff.

⁶⁶ Pernau 2015, Pernau 2018; cf. also the subtitle “From Balance to Fervor” in Pernau 2019.

⁶⁷ For some pertinent observations and speculations, cf. my etymological essay on “Arab(ic) Emotions – Back to the Roots” (Guth 2018). It is planned to follow up this question in the framework of a research project, working title *A Dictionary of Nahḍa Arabic* (DiNA).

⁶⁸ See above, p. 228, with fn. 55. – Cf. also Al-Bagdadi 2010 with its ch. I on *adab* as “Erziehung der Empfindsamkeit”, including sub-ch. I.1 “Die Aktualität des *adab* – Moralische Erziehung als kollektiver Lernprozeß.”

⁶⁹ For more details, cf. my discussions of the novella in Guth 2003 and Guth 2019.

the desire to be on equal level with Western modernity, experienced as global standard, and the need to preserve one's identity (*wujūd ahlī*, lit. 'the indigenous way of being') in the process of appropriating this standard,⁷⁰ al-Khūrī's text exposes Mikhālī's ignorance (*jahl*) and lubberly behaviour to hilarious ridicule and his arrogance (*kibriyā'*, *takabbur*), class-conceit, cowardice, self-love and greed to the deepest contempt. In contrast, the author is full of praise – explicitly in the introduction and epilogue, implicitly mainly through the positive character of Émilie's Arab cousin – of indigenous, "noble Eastern" virtues,⁷¹ like upright manliness (*muruwwa*), generosity (*karam*, *jūd*), modesty (*tawāḍu'*), and sensibility (love of poetry). Mikhālī's pseudo-Europeanness is explained and shown to be superficial and artificial, 'fake', and also lacking dignity (*karāma*), while As'ad's naturalness, simplicity (*basāṭa*) and self-esteem (*'izzat nafs*) are made to emerge as morally superior. The course of events makes the skeptical, sober, down-to-earth attitude that Mikhālī's wife displays towards her husband's 'Frankish' ambitions and the alleged French '*comte*' turn out to be thoroughly justified. Most important, however, is probably Émilie's development:⁷² In the beginning, she seems to be As'ad's faithful loving fiancée; then she lets herself be tempted by the idea to become a rich 'European' lady and turns away from As'ad, betraying their love; when the *comte*'s true identity is revealed and he disappears, she tries to regain As'ad without really loving him any longer; and when the latter rejects her, she starts to repent; finally, she is full of remorse and becomes a nun. As'ad's sincerity (*ṣidq*), faithfulness (*wafā'*), and sense of honour are thus sharply contrasted with Émilie's insincerity, coquetry, and betrayal. – While the dramatisation of the dangers of an ignorant emulation of the Western model implies, as we said above, temporalisation and thus the possibility, for the reading subject, to follow an example of failed Westernisation 'live', as a *process* unfolding in time, the negotiation of the 'East vs. West' topic in form of a story of temptation, love

70 Cf. Sheehi who underlines that it is the argument of his whole book-length study on the *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* that "the genesis of new narratives, genres, and styles in Arabic literature was a product of this tension" – Sheehi 2004, 78.

71 Cf., e.g., al-Khūrī 1860, 45-46, where the author praises places in the Arab East which, like Damascus, have been able to resist "the vicissitudes of time and taste" (*taqallubāt al-zaman wa-l-dhawq*) and remained centres of the "noble Oriental/Eastern manners, customs, ways of dressing and modes of appearance" (*al-ādāb wa-l-'awāyid* [sic!] *wa-l-aksām wa-l-hay'āt al-sharqiyya al-sharīfa*).

72 In spite of the fact that Émilie's development forms an important part of the plot it is probably too far-fetched (though perhaps not completely beside the point) to assume that al-Khūrī might have chosen the character's name as a reference (and/or counterfoil?) to Rousseau's Émile (*Émile, ou De l'éducation*, 1762).

and betrayal, hope and disappointment, coquetry and remorse, etc. adds the moral dimension, which then, again, is taught not only explicitly, in theoretical discourse, but through emotionalisation: what is shown to obstruct a sound development of society is exposed to ridicule, disgrace, shame, and/or moral gratification/satisfaction on the part of the reader (*Schadenfreude*, ‘serves him/her right!’ feeling) while the victims of Mikhālī’s unhealthy Euromania become the object of the reader’s compassion (‘poor As‘ad!’, etc.).⁷³

9.8 Conclusion

The new type of literary production that historians of Middle Eastern literature use to label “modern” and that begins to emerge from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, for the first time theorised, in the Arab(ic) context, by Khalīl al-Khūrī as “facts mingled with passion”, is a literature that

- not only refers to the real world as if it were a reliably transmitted authentic report (“*riwāyat...*”) about it,
- but it also does so via literary representation (*taqlīd*) in which the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of “what happens/-ed” (*mā waqa‘a*) is re-presented, in *creative imagination*, through generalising abstraction (*taṣwīr*),
- so that the world and its current challenges (pressure to modernise, etc.) appear on stage or in fiction as a kind of *laboratory*, a testing ground that allows the newly emerging Middle Eastern subject (that is forced to act in the rapidly changing world) to study this world and its ‘typical’ challenges in symbolic abstraction, concretely enough however to live with the representative characters through the typical situations as if they were real (verisimilitude!);
- protagonists who *act* in this world are not only presented as *reasoning* subjects, i.e., as rational beings who reflect about the situations they have to master and make ‘pro vs. con’ decisions in, but also as *feeling* subjects, with their emotions, so that the modernisation process does not remain a purely mental exercise but also is embodied (compassion, shedding tears, etc.);
- in this process, the “feeling heart” that reacts to the repercussions of the world becomes a value in itself – with also a social aspect to it: emotionalism serves the emerging ‘middle class’ subject as a tool of compensatory

⁷³ Here, again, the new Nahḍa aesthetics are clearly comparable to the aesthetics of European Enlightenment, cf., e.g., Lessing’s *Mitleidsästhetik* (aesthetics of compassion) as elaborated in his *Hamburg Dramaturgy* and translated into plays like *Miss Sara Sampson* (1755). – On the link between (the history of) morality and (the history of) emotions in general, cf. Boddice 2018, 190 ff. (= ch. 8 “Morality”).

- self-ennoblement: while the old elites are the ‘nobility’ that still holds the power in state and society, the new *efendiyya* group is still powerless but proud and already self-confident enough to claim that it is them who, with the nobility of their “feeling hearts”, are the true – i.e., the moral – nobility;
- moreover, to have *a certain type* of feelings with which one relates to the world – those Pernau calls the “civilising emotions”⁷⁴ – is in itself a manifestation of modernity and a way for the subject to express its very being modern: in a way, emotionalisation ‘guarantees’ civilisation and, thus, modernisation and progress;
 - implicit in dramatisation and emotionalisation is also the fact that the events unfold *in time* (temporalisation) so that they can be observed and re-experienced as *processes* that are the results of decisions made and actions taken by the protagonists; in this way, each novel-drama-opera becomes, to all intents and purposes, the enactment-emplotment (on stage or in literary imagination) of a civilising process *in nuce*, i.e., an instructive, salutary example of ‘performed’ modernity;⁷⁵ this dramatic enactment-emplotment also marks the transition from a static to a dynamic, ‘processualised’ approach to the world: the acting subject becomes the shaper of its own history;
 - as fictional prose and scenic art (theatre, opera) are better suited than poetry (with its “molecularity”) for the representation of processes (because processes unfold in time), prose fiction and drama gradually become the dominant vehicles to express and underline all these aspects of the *agency of this multiple subject* that seeks to assert itself: the *reasoning* subject, the *creative* subject, the *sentimental, feeling, emotional* subject, the *civilised* subject, the (en)noble(d) *middle class* subject, and the subject as the *master of its own history* – all of which are expressions of the *modern* subject;
 - the agency of this subject is at stake on several levels: When al-Khūrī demands that the individual *poetical* subject should never “sell the truth” (*bay‘ al-ḥaqīqa*, 21) nor give up his/her “personal independence and freedom” (*istiqlāl dhātī, ḥurriyya*, *ibid.*), this can also be read on a class- and a national- emancipatory level – the Nahḍa is the period in which all three modern oppositions take shape: the individual that is striving to assert itself in and against

⁷⁴ See above, fn. 64 and 65.

⁷⁵ Cf. E. Holt’s remark that “the literature printed in the journals coming out of Beirut in the early 1870s enacted [!] a debate over the comportment proper to its newly emerging bourgeois audience” – Holt 2009, 39; in the abstract she talks of a “*negotiat[ion]* of changing notions of class and gender” – *ibid.*, 37 (my italics, S.G.).

society; the middle class that is positioning itself between the old elites (*khāṣṣa*) and the ‘masses’ (*‘āmma*); and the proto-nation states that are emerging from the old empires under the simultaneous colonial situation.

From the 1860s onwards, creative imagination combined with factualist-realist referentialism, emotionalism combined with rationalism, all expressing civility, moral nobility, and agency in history (especially as social reformers), remain constants of Arabic literary production.⁷⁶ Khalīl al-Khūrī’s call for a literature in which “truth [is] mingled with passion” can be regarded as the first formulation of a new, “modern” aesthetics. This new conception was going to unfold more broadly during the following decades and find its next prominent expression (and further elaboration) shortly after WW I and the collapse of the old empires in the context of the emerging idea of a *national* literature (*adab qawmī*).⁷⁷ In the programmatic foreword⁷⁸ to a collection of short stories that are meant to be specifically *Egyptian* stories (1921), ‘Isā ‘Ubayd, a member of the group of writers who called themselves “The Modern School” (*al-Madrasa al-Ḥadītha*), demands that the new type of literature that the group aspires to create for the benefit of the independent Egyptian nation-to-be, should be based on an understanding of literary writing as an art that is able

to arouse [in us] a strong and noble feeling (*iḥsās rāqīⁿ qawīyy*) that we enjoy feeling creep into us, producing in our hearts a drunk, capturing pleasure (*ladhdha muthmila jallāba*). It takes control over us and refines our morals / makes us civilised (*yuhadhdhibunā*). Nothing can evoke this feeling but Truth (*al-ḥaqīqa*)⁷⁹ because it touches the sensitive fibers in the depths of our hearts [...].

(‘Ubayd 1921: *nūn*, i.e., end of section 4, my translation, as in Guth 2020 = Chapter 12, below)

⁷⁶ As I have shown in my *Brückenschläge* (Guth 2003b), this does not hold true for Arabic literature alone. The validity of the observations made in the present article may therefore well be extended to include the beginnings of other modern Middle Eastern literatures, esp. late Ottoman literature.

⁷⁷ As the phenomenon is not limited to the Arab world, the argument is pertinent also for Turkish and Persian, where we can observe, almost simultaneously, the emergence of the ideas of *millī edebiyāt* and *edebiyāt-e mellī*, respectively. Cf., e.g., the programmatic writings of ‘Ömer Seyf-eddīn and Ziyā Gökalp (for Turkish) and of Moḥammad-‘Alī Jamāl-zādeh (for Persian).

⁷⁸ On the emergence of the programmatic foreword in this context, cf. Al-Bagdadi 2010, 36–38 (ch. I.1.2 “Paratexte: Das literarische Vorwort”).

⁷⁹ For the difficulty of rendering the term *ḥaqīqa*, see above, note 17.

10 “Wa-hākadhā kāna ka-Iblīs”

Satan and social reform in a novel by Salīm al-Bustānī
(*Bint al-‘aṣr*, 1875)

First published in *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature*, ed. A. Neuwirth et al. (Beirut/Stuttgart 1999), 301–307

This chapter: The following essay is a miniature, originally published in a volume on *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature*, hence the focus on the archetypal subtext of temptation and the Devil. In Salīm al-Bustānī’s “social romance” (Moosa 1997), we will meet a writing subject that seeks to assert himself in public as a social critic who emphasizes his position by strong, almost didactic moralising and who does so by recurring to traditional religious concepts, common to both Christendom and Islam. I will argue that this can be read as an indicator of secularisation.¹ As already noted in the preceding chapters, the social background of emerging subjectivity is a kind of middle-class here, too, a mercantile bourgeoisie who are claiming for themselves a nobility of character and culturedness rather than one of wealth and inherited prestige.

★ ★ ★

10.1 Introduction

Although the name Iblīs² (< Greek *diábolos*) is mentioned only once in the text analyzed in this study, there is more about this single textual appearance than one might expect. It is, in my opinion, a sign on the surface of the text pointing to an archetypal subtext that is instrumental in the author’s social criticism and his quest for a reform based on the ideas of Enlightenment.

¹ For other elements of secularisation, see above, Chapter 3 (secularisation in language) and Chapter 5 (in al-Marṣafī’s realism-pragmatism).

² “accuser, slanderer”, agent noun, from Greek *diaballein* “to slander, attack”, lit. “to throw across”, from *dia-* “across, through” + *ballein* “to throw” – etymonline, s.v. “devil” (https://www.etymonline.com/word/devil#etymonline_v_8484, as of Dec. 12, 2023).

The text examined here is a story by Salīm al-Bustānī (1848–1884)³ entitled *Bint al-‘aşr*. It was serialised in the 1875 issues of the periodical *al-Jinān*⁴ founded in 1870 by Salīm’s father Buṭrus, but known to have been written largely by the son;⁵ it was to become “the leading non-official Arabic weekly for the next one and a half decades” (Wielandt 1980, 127).⁶ The text is a mixture, very typical of its time, of leisurely entertainment – love, jealousy, and crime are important elements – , but also of social criticism and moralist instruction. A detailed summary of the plot will provide us with the main features of the text that we can build our analysis and interpretation on.

10.1.1 Plot summary

Anīs, the son of the town’s wealthiest merchant, but himself not very ambitious, has fallen in love with Rīma, a girl from a well-to-do family. Rīma, however, loves not Anīs but a certain Mājid, another young merchant who is not as rich as Anīs but has been able to acquire, by hard and ambitious work, a certain fortune.

At an evening party given by a rich local notable, Mājid and Rīma seize the opportunity to sit together and talk a lot – a behaviour that drives Anīs jealous. Love (which has come over him like an irresistible fate) and alcohol (which he takes refuge in) combine to make him blind enough to talk about his hurt feelings to a certain Šāliḥ. This villain, who is described as being “like the Devil” (*kāna ka-Iblīs*, 179a),⁷ hastens to support Anīs’s desire to take revenge on his rival Mājid and offers Anīs his help... which the latter accepts without really being aware of the possible consequences of doing so.

After some unsuccessful attempts to divert Mājid and Rīma from each other, the “devil” Šāliḥ cooks up a shrewd plan that aims at ruining Mājid financially

³ For his life and thought see, e.g., Dāghir 1956/1983, Part 2 (*al-Rāḥilūn* 1800–1955), 186–8 (with additional references); article “al-Bustānī”, no. 6 [J. Abdel-Nour], in *ET*² (suppl.); Georgescu 1978, 44–64 and passim; Jihā 1989, 15–38.

⁴ *al-Jinān* 1875, 30ff., 66ff., 102ff., 138ff., 174ff., 210ff., 249ff., 283ff., 318ff., 354ff., always in the *fukāhāt* section. For *al-Jinān*, its history and aims etc. in general see, e.g., Jihā 1989, 39–73; Hafez 1993, 70 and 111; Hourani 1962/1989, 274.

⁵ Cf. e.g. Hourani 1962/1989, 245.

⁶ In 1886, *al-Jinān* “finally ceased to appear because of the growing difficulties of writing freely under the rule of Abdülhamid” – Hourani 1989, 245.

⁷ Page numbers refer to *al-Jinān* 1875, “a” and “b” indicating the first and second column of a page, respectively.

so that he would not be a suitable husband for Rīma any longer on account of his poverty. The plan works out: with the help of forged documents, securities, commercial papers, pseudo-transactions and a hired front man, Şālih indeed succeeds in drawing Mājid into the trap that eventually brings about his total bankruptcy.

Contrary to Şālih's and Anīs's expectations and hopes, however, Rīma remains all the more faithful to her beloved, despite his sudden impoverishment, for what counts for the prudent and modest girl are the true, inner values only. Seeing that his plans have failed again, Şālih convinces Anīs that it would be the best now to get rid of Mājid once and for all, and Anīs willy-nilly consents. Luckily, their conversation is eavesdropped on by a servant, who then can inform Mājid that there are plans to murder him. Mājid now begins to suspect that his bankruptcy, too, might be the product of an intrigue arranged by Anīs and Şālih. He receives support from the town's new judge who is in charge of investigations concerned with Mājid's bankruptcy and who, as an exception of his time, is incorruptible and really loves justice. His inquiries into the matter have already made him smell where the truth might lie.

The hired front man whose bankruptcy had been feigned in order to draw Mājid into ruin, and who had accepted to spend some months in prison in return for a large financial compensation from Anīs – this man now gets frightened since the incorruptible judge apparently wants to set a warning example in his case so that he might sentence him to ten or fifteen years in jail. He starts feeling abandoned by Anīs and Şālih and soon confesses the truth to the judge. The judge makes Mājid privy to this information, and Mājid tells his fiancée Rīma about them. Behind the door, Rīma's sister Jamīla happens to listen to their conversation and hurries to confront Anīs, whom she loves, with what she has heard. Anīs, who until then had only been pretending to love Jamīla in order to always have an opportunity to be close to Rīma, all of a sudden feels very much enchanted by Jamīla, so much so that he too comes to regret having allowed himself to be carried away and approve of criminal deeds. Burning with love for Anīs, Jamīla forgives him his evil doings and puts in a good word for him with her sister so that Rīma shall persuade her fiancé not to insist on taking Anīs to court since he will get his money back from him down to the last penny. Mājid, gentle and indulgent as he is, is ready to do so on the spot. The judge shows some leniency with the repentant front man, too; the "devil" Şālih, however, is exiled from town. The end is, of course, a double wedding: Mājid marries Rīma, and Anīs marries Jamīla.

10.2 Analysis and discussion

Before analyzing Šāliḥ the “Devil”’s function in this story, let us first have a short look at his background, his personality and the aim he pursues in acting as he does. Al-Bustānī introduces him as

one of those who pretend to be of noble origin and wealthy although he was in permanent need (*fī ḥtiyāj dā'im*) [of money] and his descent was limited [only] to his father who, in the beginning, had been a broker notorious for his dishonesty by which he had ruined a third of all [the town’s] merchants.

(al-Bustānī 1875, 105a)

The father had then doubled his wealth by gambling and built a beautiful house, a fact that had earned him social esteem and made him be looked upon even by the old rich elite as one of theirs.

But what man has gathered unlawfully, most often melts away in a way similar to that of its acquisition, and so gambling and drinking took away from him and his son this money, leaving behind only a few remnants, and these were used by the son to conceal the truth of his situation after his father’s death.

(ibid.)

Šāliḥ’s situation is not an easy one: according to the text, he is the son of a *nouveau riche* who became poor again after having risen to a considerable social status. In order not to lose this status – a status that is bound to the display of wealth and obliges one, among other things, to give luxurious evening parties from time to time – Šāliḥ sometimes eats nothing but dry bread, to save some money, and sometimes sells things he has been given as present by friends or acquaintances.

Although, strictly speaking, only the father is to be blamed for the loss of fortune, the author nevertheless finds no space to have mercy on the son either – for two reasons: first, he makes clear that he considers Šāliḥ’s squandering money on the maintenance of a rich man’s image imprudent and unreasonable – he’d better forget about the “vain glory” (*al-majd al-bāṭil*, 139b and *passim*) of appearances and instead save the money and slowly reaccumulate a sound capital stock on which to build new, promising and useful projects. We could even expect him to do so since he does not belong to the group of stupid ordinary people (*al-‘amma al-mutaghaffila*, 139b) but can read and write, has a basic knowledge of grammar, geography, mathematics, etc., and is even quite fluent in a foreign language. From this description we may infer that what al-Bustānī wants the reader to detest most in this character is his immodesty, his desire to live in grand style instead of the modest life of an average citizen, a fault that the author directly relates to the highly condemnable non-usage of one’s intellectual capacity – a

logical nexus that shows him clearly as a man of Enlightenment for whom the best way of acting and behaviour results directly from the use of *reason*.

The reader should not have mercy on Šāliḥ also because he has a “malicious” character (*sharīr*, 105a). The narrator presents him as such right from his first appearance in the text and gives the reader some evidence for the validity of his judgment. For example, Šāliḥ does not hesitate to consider murdering Mājid as well as the front man as a means to reach his goals. The narrator also informs us that Šāliḥ enjoys plotting and scheming (*ilqā’ al-fitān*, 140b) as well as profiting from subsequent disasters. In order to maintain the social status he is proud of and of which he boasts, Šāliḥ plans to systematically ‘milk’ his victims. First, he waits for someone rich to have some kind of problem, as Anīs has with his rival Mājid. When he has found such a victim he seeks to gain the other’s confidence by flattery and hypocrisy, then offers his help, pretending that he might even spend large amounts of money to help his friends, thereby of course arousing those friends’ opposition and their offering him the money he might need to help them. And it does not need much persuasion for them to finally accept to give him a large sum, a great deal of which he will, of course, put in his own pocket.

Two things are evident here: (1) Šāliḥ is apparently, and in one incident also openly, likened to Iblīs; (2) this Iblīs is conceived of in quite conventional terms: for al-Bustānī he is still an inciter or promoter of vain desires and lower instincts in man⁸ – in our case especially Anīs’s longing for revenge out of hurt vanity, his love for himself, and the arrogant belief, resulting from class snobbery, that as the richer one he, not Mājid, is entitled to beautiful Rīma and should be adored by her. For al-Bustānī, Iblīs is still the permanent temptator and the Evil One who draws pleasure from sowing the seeds of discord, *fitna*, among innocent and virtuous people.

What is new and makes him a very specific devil is, I think, the fact that al-Bustānī, on the one hand, clearly marks him as belonging to a certain social group – he is the son of a re-impoveryished *nouveau riche* –; on the other, he instrumentalises the character for social criticism. I will try to show now that likening Šāliḥ to Iblīs serves al-Bustānī as a means to *sanctify* his objectives and must therefore be considered as part of the process of secularisation that accompanied nineteenth century enlightenment in the Arab world.

First of all, we should state that the identification of Satan with a *nouveau riche* who tries, by all means, not to lose his social status can be taken as evidence for that we are dealing here with a discourse of an essentially *bourgeois* nature

8 Cf. article “Iblīs” (A.J. Wensinck [L. Gardet]), in *EP*².

or, to be more precise, the discourse of an *educated* bourgeoisie (*Bildungsbürgertum*). The social group favored by al-Bustānī shows all the characteristics of an increasingly self-conscious educated bourgeoisie as we know it from the age of Enlightenment in Europe,⁹ and in this group’s value system Ṣāliḥ always plays the part of the negative antipode: the educated bourgeois like Mājid or Rīma is virtuous, Ṣāliḥ embodies pure Vice; in Ṣāliḥ culminates that kind of materialistic thinking that al-Bustānī sees as the main disease contemporary society is suffering from while the educated bourgeois is upholding the *true, spiritual, idealistic* values – values that come to range higher in the hierarchy than external appearance because the educated bourgeois has to compensate in some way for his lack of wealth and nobility, and this he does by resorting to moral values, replacing the nobleness of origin and wealth (which he has not) with the only nobleness *he* possesses: the nobleness of character.

This value system is reminiscent of European Enlightenment also in the emphasis it lays on human reason as well as in a more or less direct equation of the reasonable with the morally good. So, even Ṣāliḥ’s maliciousness is, in the end, described by al-Bustānī as resulting from *jahl* “ignorance”, because he does not employ reason, *‘aql*, against the lower instincts, *fiṭra*: we remember the author assuring us that if Ṣāliḥ were wise he would not spend all his money on the maintenance of *al-majd al-bāṭil* but lead a moderate life, saving some of his money for future investments in useful projects. That the value system advocated by al-Bustānī is basically rationalistic is already evident from the frequency with which the words *‘aql* and *ta’aqquq* (or their contraries) occur in the text.

Let us now look at the function that Ṣāliḥ’s ‘diabolisation’, or ‘satanification’ fulfill in the rationalistic, moralistic, essentially bourgeois discourse that we are dealing with here. Two main functions can be observed.

First, diabolisation serves the author and his own social group, the new educated bourgeoisie, as a means to deny other rival forces a leading position in the quickly changing society of the second half of the nineteenth century. As in eighteenth century Enlightenment in Europe, the educated bourgeoisie in the Arab world, too, in their struggle for social and political recognition tend to compensate for a *de facto* lack of power by elevating their own values through a usurpation of all possible virtues and a corresponding moral condemnation of rival forces. Very similar to eighteenth century Europe where the opponents of the

⁹ For a comparative investigation into the psychological make-up of this class, in German resp. Arab Enlightenment, see my “*Fa-ghawraqat ‘uyūnuhum bi-l-dumū*” = Guth 1997b [= Chapter 11 of the present volume].

bourgeois are the court and nobility, the author here targets the wealthy and powerful group of Arab merchants and bankers (whom he calls *akābir* or *a'yān*, e.g., 32b), the old rich elite as well as the *nouveaux riches*. Further he attacks their value system in which wealth defines one's position on the social ladder and where the display of luxury plays an accordingly important role. In having recourse to an archetype, diabolisation not only condemns the quest for *al-majd al-bāṭil* and its adherents morally but also adds the notion of the demoniac, in this way underlining their danger to society and the need to be on one's guard in face of the tempter.

The second main and, I believe, even more important function of drawing upon the Iblis/*fitna* archetype is that it allows the author to sanctify his own cause. Naming Ṣāliḥ an "Iblis" and his overall diabolisation widens the space of significance from the narrow realm of contemporary social conditions into the horizon of a quasi-religious meaning of the narrated events. It generates a subtext in which we have Satan, the enemy of God and mankind, tempting men, but the true believers resisting temptation because they are in the possession of the right revelation. In this way not only is Ṣāliḥ diabolised and made the enemy of mankind as a whole, but also are Rīma and Mājid elevated correspondingly into the position of the true believers who emerge from *fitna* unharmed or even strengthened, and what they believe in – the powers of reason in the first place, the satisfaction with a modest life style out of insight in the vanity of external appearances, etc. – all this is implicitly endowed with the quality of the Right Revelation, the divine message that immunises against all harms.

All this is, of course, only one expression of the process that is as essential for eighteenth century Enlightenment in Europe as it is for Arab Enlightenment in the second half of the nineteenth century: the far-ranging process of secularisation. In making an originally religious archetype instrumental in social criticism – which can be achieved because of the essentially moralistic nature of the archetypal pattern – , al-Bustānī has secularised the religious and at the same time sanctified the earthly, he has become a 'missionary of the religion of Reason'.

The fact that, ironically, this missionary of Reason, in order to make his point, evidently falls back on an irrational method of representing social conditions in terms of a simplifying dualistic model such as the one expressed in the Iblis/*fitna* archetype may well be regarded, again, as an outcome of the good old dialectics of Enlightenment.

11 “*Fa-ghrawraqat ‘uyūnuhum bi-l-dumū’...*”

Some notes on the flood of tears in early modern Arabic fiction

First published in *Encounters of Words and Texts*, ed. L. Edzard and C. Szyska (Hildesheim 1997), 111–123

This chapter expands on what has already been said above, especially in Chapter 9, on emotionalism as a key aspect of late nineteenth, early twentieth century Middle Eastern literature. When I – back in 1997 – wrote the article from which the chapter is derived, my primary aim was to bring attention to this phenomenon, which seemed to be unduly overlooked or even ridiculed in literary histories and research at the time.

I was inspired to do so by the fascinating lectures I had had the privilege to attend at Bonn University in the early 1990s, given by the late Peter Pütz, on German literature of the eighteenth century, particularly Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s plays and the periods of Enlightenment, *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress), and *Empfindsamkeit* (Sensibility). In German literature of that time, rationalism and emotionalism coexisted and were considered two sides of the same coin. Drawing from this comparison, I sought to challenge the prevailing negative opinion towards emotionalist and sentimentalist tendencies in the Arab(ic) *Nahḍa* by typologically comparing it to the ‘German *Nahḍa*’ and its sentimentalism, including its successor in the *Biedermeier* period.

Two years after my article (and obviously unaware of it), Stephen Sheehi released a study on Jurjī Zaydān’s historical novel *al-Mamlūk al-shārid* (“The Fugitive Mamluk”) from 1891, which was one of the texts I had examined in my article. While I had primarily focused on the novel as a reflection of the emerging bourgeoisie and their struggle for self-assertion in late nineteenth-century Arab society, Sheehi’s analysis took a different approach. For Sheehi, neither the sociological aspect nor parallels outside the Arab world were at the centre of interest; rather, he examined the composition of the novel’s inventory of characters, finding that historical and fictional characters each fulfilled different, complementary functions in relation to emerging subjectivity in general. In his article,

[t]he distinction between fictional and historical characters is seen not to be an arbitrary one but to reflect two different movements of becoming reformed subjects. The split between these two sets of characters also corresponds to a distinction between public and private spaces. In other words, these two sets of protagonists reflect two different levels of

subjectivity, the political-cultural and the personal; each group of characters going through their own journeys of becoming efficacious native Arab subjects. Both cases can be read as allegories for subjective renewal and different tactics of the Nahḍah itself.

(Sheehi 1999, 104–05)¹

Another significant study on emotionalism and sentimentalist trends during the Nahḍa is Samuela Pagani's fine essay, "Manfalūṭī (1876–1924), l'amour pur, et la critique sentimentale de la civilisation", published in 2020.² This essay builds upon ideas raised in my 1997 article and Sheehi's observations, as well as Nāḥī Najīb's groundbreaking *Kitāb al-Aḥzān* from 1983. With its focus on al-Manfalūṭī's sentimentalism, Najīb's booklet had been an important source of inspiration already for my article/this chapter.

Pagani emphasizes the civilising function of emotions during the critical period surrounding World War I, when the old empires – and with them the old world order – collapsed, and new forms of political and societal organisation had to be found. With this, Pagani's approach aligns with Margrit Pernau's concept of "civilizing emotions" (Pernau 2015), which can provide a suitable conceptual framework for *all* the above findings on the phenomenon of emotionalism during the Nahḍa, as it highlights the interrelatedness of political and social nation-building, cultural expression, and the emotional-psychological condition of emerging subjectivity.

In Chapter 9, we demonstrated that al-Khūrī, in his *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji* (1859), saw "passion" as a desired addition to his critical analysis and enlightened vision of contemporary society. In the texts examined in the chapter below (as well as by Sheehi and Pagani), emotionalism appears to have taken the lead and become equally important as the rational(ist) aspects of emerging subjectivity. Moreover, these texts give proof to the fact that, during the later years of the Nahḍa, the emerged subjects became more imaginative, creative, and proactive in designing alternative world orders. For *The Fugitive Mamluk*, for instance, Sheehi pointed out that

the "objectivity" of historical knowledge is also arranged by an imagination, or the imaginary, of the Renaissance "mind." This very imagination put forth a subjective *imago* for the

¹ For a prolongation, or successor, of Sheehi's "political-cultural" subjectivity, see below, Part V (on nation building and the "national personality", etc.). The "personal" aspect will step back for a while during the period of early nation building, but will find its successor in the many autobiographical novels and novels of formation of the self (cf., e.g., Chapters 15 and 19.4).

² Pagani's article forms a chapter in the same volume on *adab*, edited in 2019/20 by C. Mayeur-Jaouen, in which also the first version of Chapter 4 of the present volume ("Adab as the Art to Make the Right Choice...") was published.

ideal Arab subject, and was rooted in an epistemology of the Nahḍah that struggled to create new social, subjective, cultural and political spaces.

(Sheehi 1999, 105)

This observation further emphasizes that the new ‘modern’ subjectivity encountered in Nahḍa texts has multiple – but definitively complementary – dimensions. As summarized towards the end of Chapter 9 above, it is an enlightened and critically reasoning subject, as well as a feeling and emotional subject. Additionally, it is a creative subject that utilizes its imagination and fantasy, not only in literature and the arts but also in envisioning possible new orders for the future (cf. Chapter 17, below, on utopia). While it may be challenging to quantify the degrees of imagination, fantasy, and creativity, if we observe an increase in these aspects of emerged subjectivity in the later decades of the Nahḍa, it could correspond to the shift from “Reproductionism” to “Creativism” in global history posited by Walter Falk.³ This potential shift signifies the Arab’s movement away from the old order of the Ottoman Empire towards new models of socio-political organisation. It could indicate a transition from Reproductionism, the reproduction and preservation of existing societal structures, to Creativism, the creation of new ideas and systems. These observations align with the discussions in previous chapters regarding periodisation and periodisational terminology.

* * *

11.1 Sentimentalism – a blind spot in literary histories

In Arabic fiction of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, tears flow in abundance, no matter which kind of narrative one might look at: be it the novels of entertainment, so popular at the time, or the so-called “historical” novels, they flow in short stories with idealistic and/or didactic intention, often moralizing or patriotic in purpose, as well as in narratives of social criticism or simply in those of adventures. The lachrymose element is present quite early in the second half of the nineteenth century, and in the first decades of the twentieth it reached the

³ See above, end of introductory section to Chapter 1, where I tentatively read the Arabs’ turning away from the old order of the Ottoman Empire to new models of socio-political organisation as a possible indicator of a transition from Falk’s period of “Reproductionism” to that of “Creativism”; see also Chapter 2, on periodisation and periodisational terminology in general, end of introductory section to Chapter 4 for a presentation of “Reproductionism”, and Chapter 18.3 for a brief characterisation of “Creativism”, and a follow-up on “Reproductionism”).

zenith of its prosperity with authors living in the American diaspora, like Jubrān Khalil Jubrān (1883–1931), but also – and most remarkably – with the Egyptian Muṣṭafā Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī (1876–1924), to an extent that contemporaries considered the latter’s influence and importance so great that they thought it appropriate to label the entire period around World War I the “Manfalūṭian era”. This author, they say, “spoke with the tongue of all of us and put down on paper what every heart felt” (Naḡīb 1983, 42), “all from Damascus in Syria down to Fes in Morocco the hearts of a whole generation beat” with Manfalūṭī’s protagonists (ibid., 7), and there was rarely a house in which you would not have found at least one of this writer’s works (ibid.).

It appears that sentimentality was highly popular and prevalent in the texts of that time, albeit with varying content. Consequently, one would expect the phenomenon of excessive tears to have been recognized and thoroughly studied in literary history. However, it seems that apart from Nāḡī Najīb (Nagi Naguib)’s study on al-Manfalūṭī titled *Kitāb al-aḥzān* (1983, see Bibliography).⁴, this is not the case, potentially leading to sentimentality and tearfulness being reasons why both authors and readers of this literature have not been taken seriously and their works have been somewhat disregarded by scholarly research. Additionally, considering that Arab writers during this period extensively drew inspiration from European literature, the accusation of sentimentalism is coupled with a lack of originality. Consequently, delving deeper into this literature spanning no less than half a century may seem to be not worthwhile and might elicit nothing more than a pitiful smile.

Given the temporal and cultural gap between us and the subject we are investigating, it is not surprising that we might find amusement or a sense of humor in the flood of tears. In fact, this reaction is quite natural, as we often encounter similar responses in our own literary heritage.

4 [The statement about the lack of scholarly attention given to the phenomenon is from the mid-1990s and therefore slightly dated. Since then, Margrit Pernau’s fundamental research has pointed to the “civilising mission” of emotions and their powerful role in processes of nation building, and Samuela Pagani has come with a fine study of the function of “pure love” and a “critique sentimentale de la civilisation” in Muṣṭafā Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī’s writings. I have myself likewise dealt with related questions on several occasions, e.g., in studies of Reṣat Nuri Güntekin’s *Çalıkuşu*, a ‘best-seller’ of early Republican Turkey (see below, Chapters 15 and 19.3) or in the article (included above as Chapter 9) on the importance of “passion” for al-Bustānī’s recursor, Khalil Al-Khūrī, already in 1859/60. An updated summary of pertinent research as well as a lexico-statistical approach is expected to be published soon, in a volume on Arab(ic) Modernism edited by Cleophra Ferrari, under the title “Modern feelings: On the role of emotions in the Arabic novel of the Nahḍa” – Guth and Johnsson, forthcoming).]

I recall instances in my German literature classes in high-school where we would jest about the agonizing “Sufferings of Young Werther” (*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, 1774) and fail to comprehend why such “kitsch” led to a veritable wave of suicides in Europe during its time. Similarly, I remember attending university lectures on G. E. Lessing’s (1729–1781) dramas, particularly the one discussing *Miss Sara Sampson* (1755), which remains vivid in my memory. During the lecture, my esteemed late teacher, Peter Pütz, informed the audience that the performances of this highly pathetic *Trauerspiel* were accompanied by an outpouring of sentimental tears on stage and sparked deep emotions in the profoundly moved spectators; the modern student audience, however, burst out in loud laughter.

Nevertheless, today, once the initial laughter subsides, both Lessing’s *Miss Sara Sampson* and Goethe’s *Werther* receive the appropriate attention from literary historians, if not high regard. This is primarily due to our ability to read these texts as essential documents of an epoch whose significance in the history of literature, ideologies, and thought cannot be overstated: the age of Enlightenment, *Empfindsamkeit* (Age of Sensibility), and *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress). Once we recognize this, the importance of *Miss Sara Sampson*, for example, should not diminish, even when we realize that Lessing himself may not have invented the plot of this *Trauerspiel*, but instead drew inspiration from an *English* piece of literature of that time – *Empfindsamkeit* as a whole was not a genuine German invention anyway, but rather initiated its ‘sentimental journey’ across Europe from *England*.⁵

Therefore, can we not approach tearful Arabic literature from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in a similar manner?

It is important to clarify that I will not be able, in the essay below, to provide a definitive answer to this question that will satisfy the curiosity of the interested reader. Therefore, the objective of my study is solely to highlight certain phenomena present in German literature of the eighteenth century which, in my opinion, exhibit similarities in certain aspects. Through this exploration, my intention is to establish criteria that may be helpful in accurately describing and evaluating the so-called “beginnings” of modern Arabic fiction more effectively, with greater

5 From about 1715 onwards, the so-called “moral weeklies” (*The Tatter*, *The Spectator*, *The Guardian*, etc.) were imitated in Germany and Switzerland (*Vernünftler*, *Der Patriot*, *Discourse der Mahlern/Maler der Sitten*, *Die vernünftigen Tadlerinnen*, and many others). Much favoured, translated, adapted, or imitated were also ‘family novels’ and ‘novels of virtue,’ especially those by Samuel Richardson. L. Sterne’s sentimental novels, such as *Sentimental Journey* (1768) to which I am alluding, were equally received with great enthusiasm.

precision and more adequately than in the past when the only term with which these phenomena used to be approached was “romanticism”. Unfortunately, the term is employed in some instances even today – as we shall soon discover.

11.2 Tears flowing in abundance – some examples

Why do so many heroes shed so many tears in this literature? Why is weeping obviously so important to the authors and the public alike? Let us have a look at some of the texts.

When the Lebanese author Salīm al-Bustānī (1848–1884) wrote his novel *Bint al-‘aṣr* (“Daughter of Her Times”,⁶ published in 1875) he intended it as a story of social criticism. Making the narrator and the positive heroes his own mouthpiece, he criticizes sharply many of the evils which he thought were all too widespread at his time and therefore endangered common weal, e.g., the *tafarnuj* (blind imitation of the Europeans),⁷ ostentatiousness and wastefulness of the rich compatriots as well as their habit of measuring everything and everybody by nothing else but their money and luxurious external appearances. This opinion clearly shows al-Bustānī as a man of the Nahḍa whose thinking, in various aspects, comes very close to that of the men of eighteenth century Enlightenment in Europe. Like the enlightened thinker with his reformist ambitions, al-Bustānī too has in mind the well-being of the entire contemporary society; Reason (‘*aql*, *ta‘aqqul*) for him has the very same overall importance as it has for the European men of Enlightenment; and just like the latter, they too associate reasonableness with moral goodness and attribute the presence of various evils primarily to a deficiency in understanding and sheer ignorance (*jahl*). In the didactic fervour nourished by a deep belief in the convincingness of arguments based on Reason, and in *what* he regards as reasonable and therefore morally acceptable – i.e., a critical evaluation, always consciously paying reverence to centuries-old traditions, of the pros and cons of the innovations imported from the West; modesty, thrift, righteousness; contempt for pure externals as opposed to love of the true, inner values – in all this al-Bustānī appears to think in the same, essentially *bourgeois*, spirit as the men of Enlightenment. Considering al-Bustānī’s emphasis on the importance of education, it is possible to narrow down the social group associated with this mindset to an *educational bourgeoisie* (*Bildungsbürgertum*), one that is opposed

⁶ A freer translation could probably be: “A Modern Girl.”

⁷ [Cf. above, Chapter 4, on this topic in Khalil al-Khūrī’s *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji* (1859/60) and his contemporary Ottoman colleague Aḥmed Midḥat’s *Felātūn Beğ ile Rākım Efendi* (1875).]

in *Bint al-‘aṣr* to the group of wealthy merchants, tradesmen and bankers whom the author classifies as *akābir* or *a‘yān*, i.e., “patricians” or “notables”.

In the novel, the protagonist Rīma expresses her emotions through tears as she declares her unwavering support for Mājīd, her beloved, even in the face of his sudden and complete loss of wealth due to a jealous rival’s scheme. She assures him of her continued love, stating that she will be content with a modest lifestyle as his wife. Her ultimate desire, she says, is to experience the happiness that comes from having the friendship and love of such a virtuous companion as Mājīd. On the other hand, Mājīd himself is moved to tears upon realizing that Rīma’s affection for him is not dependent on his financial status. Despite the material bankruptcy he has just suffered, he rejoices for having made a big ‘bargain’ that will last the whole of his life.

Indeed, the tears shed by the heroes in this narrative are evident signs of being profoundly moved. This observation can potentially provide insight into further characterizing the educational bourgeoisie to which the author belongs. One possible approach is to examine the context in which these tears are shed. This context bears a striking resemblance to that of melodramas (*Rührstücke*) as described in a literary encyclopedia for the European context. Similar to the plots of these plays, the narrative under discussion here exhibits

an essentially tragic outline of the plot [in *Bint al-‘aṣr*, love and jealousy are destiny-like powers (!)]; a conciliatory end by which a bad closure is consciously avoided and which makes plausible, in some way at least, the excessive display of virtue, noble-mindedness and renunciation a motivation for which would otherwise have been difficult to establish; an ending that nivellates the plot’s tragic potential into sentimentality by only modest punishments for the intriguing villains, but rich reward for the deceived victims, thus replacing, on the spectators’ part, deep shockedness with relief and serene amusement [Mājīd, e.g., in the end is so noble as to forgive his rival although he knows that the latter, until not long ago, had planned to have him murdered; the person pulling the wires of all intrigues and murderous plans – who is, at one occasion, even called a “devil” – is sentenced by a lenient judge to no more than exile in another town; and finally the reader is made to attend, above all, a double wedding]; and, as a whole, after going through a state of suspense between shocking tragedy and relieved serenity, in a simplified view of life moral seriousness and responsibility in the end enjoy watching the obligatory triumph of Virtue.

(Wilpert 1979, 707, s.v. “Rührstück”)

The *Rührstücke* characterised in the above entry are a literary genre that came into being during the age of Enlightenment as a derivative of the *Bürgerliches Trauerspiel* (eighteenth century bourgeois ‘tragedy’). According to Wilpert, “Rührstücke” (melodramas) should be understood as a type of literature that, from a sociological standpoint, can be categorized as belonging to a bourgeoisie that has achieved social prestige *only recently*, a bourgeoisie, however, that has

already developed a strong sense of self-confidence and begun to idealize itself as representatives of the highest moral values. Drawing on this interpretation, there seems to be no inherent obstacle to applying a similar analysis to al-Bustānī's *Bint al-ʿaṣr* and other fiction...

... among which also the so-called “historical novels” – or, as I would prefer to label them, “historicizing romances” – of Jurjī Zaydān (1864–1914). The sentence that I have taken as the main title for this study is in fact a quotation, if slightly modified, from one of these romances, *al-Mamlūk al-shārid* (“The Straying/Fugitive Mamluk”⁸), published in 1891, i.e., sixteen years after al-Bustānī's *Bint al-ʿaṣr*. Here comes a short plot summary (page references are to the original edition indicated in the Bibliography):

Beautiful Jamīla believes that her husband, an Egyptian mamluk named Amīn, has been slaughtered like all the other mamluks in the massacre of 1811 by which Mohammed Ali wanted to end the opposition of this formerly most influential group. Jamīla is pregnant, but for fear of enslavement after her husband's death she nonetheless takes the risk of fleeing, heading for Lebanon together with a faithful servant and her son. While giving birth to a second son (whom she names Gharīb) the first gets lost, so that on her arrival in Lebanon she is already mourning for two – supposedly dead – of her beloved (what she indeed does quite amply together with her servant). As good luck then has it, the refugees are welcomed as guests and accommodated with great hospitality by Emir Bashīr at the Bayt ad-Dīn palace. The emir even takes over the care for Jamīla's little son as if he was Gharīb's own father. Although everybody is quite happy with this new situation it is only now that the development of the novel's events really starts; as a matter of course, weeping has not yet come to an end either. In the following paragraph I have collected some of the most impressive passages of lachrymosity.

Many years later Jamīla weeps as she comes to know that one of the mamluks allegedly managed to escape being murdered by Mohammed Ali's men, giving her back the hope that her husband could still be alive (Zaydān [n.d.], 61). She weeps again – and, in doing so, “the tears [almost] suffocate her” (*wa-qad khanaqat-hā l-ʿabarāt*) – when she thinks she must fear Bashīr's anger as soon as he would learn about her true identity, i.e., that she is the same Salmā who, some years ago, had fled from Lebanon because she did not want to be married to a man she did not love (ibid.). And again she “could not but weep” (ibid., 63) when she heard that beloved little Gharīb, on an expedition in Egypt with his ‘father’ Bashīr, once had not returned from a ride into the desert, but in the end had been rescued as through a miracle. “With her knees trembling” she soon gives “free rein to her weeping” (*aṭlaqat li-nafsihā ʿinān al-bukāʾ*) and again is almost “suffocated by tears” when she realizes that the miraculous rescuer of the desert must have been nobody else than her husband, her son's real father, until then believed to be dead; that the latter, however, is lost again because, ignorant of each other's existence, they had not recognized each other (ibid.,

⁸ German translation by Martin Thilo under the title *Der letzte Mameluck und seine Irrfahrten: ein historischer Roman* von Girgī Zaidān (Barmen: Klein, 1917).

67). The faithful servant is thus sent out to take up his missing master’s tracks. For him, too, “everything went black” and “his eyes became bathed in tears” (*fa-ghrawraqat ‘aynāhu bi-l-dumū’*) when he imagined what could have happened already to his master who, as he came to learn, out of desperation about the loss of his family, had volunteered for a mission at the front-lines in Sudan (ibid., 81). Twenty pages later, Amīn Beğ the Mameluk, still alive but wandering around aimlessly out of sheer grief, “broke out into tears” (*fa-nhamarat dumū‘uh*, lit., his tears gushed out) when, meanwhile in Lebanon, he happens to meet a young man who recognizes him as the one who rescued him from danger in the Egyptian desert (ibid., 99). Sometime before that, Gharīb had set out for a dangerous task (as he had done often before), and when his mother – weepingly – provides him with an amulet in order to protect him against all dangers on his excursion, he kisses it and puts it in his pocket... *wa-qad ighrawraqat ‘aynāhu bi-l-dumū’* (ibid., 89). When Amīn and Jamīla/Salmā, after such a long time of painful separation, meet again for the first time and when Amīn then learns that the man he had saved in Egypt and now met again here was his own son

he turned away from her [Jamīla/Salmā] to Gharīb and cried out: “Oh my son, my son! You are my son, Gharīb?” He kissed him and embraced him, *wa-‘aynāhu tajrifāni l-dumū’*. And now also Gharīb joined in weeping with the other two, so bewildered that everything appeared to him like a dream.

(ibid., 101)

In the end, also the first son (who had been lost on the way from Egypt to Lebanon) reappears; he has lived through an odyssey but had also, on one occasion, saved his brother’s life without knowing that he was his brother, and when this missing one finally rushes up to his parents to kiss their hands “everybody wept from the vehemence of joy” (*wa-l-jamī‘ yabkūna min shiddat al-faraḥ*, ibid., 122).

It may be difficult to believe, given the emotional nature of the summary, but novels like *al-Mamlūk al-shārid* were intended by Zaydān, an enlightened author, to serve as vehicles for *knowledge* to a wide audience, in this case knowledge pertaining to historical facts of the time of Mohammed Ali in Egypt and Emir Bashīr II in Lebanon.⁹ Considering the sentimental nature of the novel’s events (with which Zaydān skillfully intertwined the historical data that I had to omit for the sake of brevity), we can infer that the psychological disposition of Zaydān’s reading public was likely not very different from that of the audience of August von

⁹ Cf. the novel’s subtitle (as in the 3rd edn, Cairo 1904): (*riwāya*) *ta’rīḥiyya adabiyya ta-taḍamman ḥawādiṯ Miṣr wa-Sūriyā wa-aḥwāla-humā fī l-niṣf al-awwal min al-qarn al-māḍi wa-min abṭālī-hā al-Amīr Bashīr al-Shihābi wa-Muḥammad ‘Alī Bāshā wa-Ibrāhīm Bāshā wa-Amīn Beğ* “literary historical (account) containing events of Egypt and Syria and the general situation there in the first half of the last century, and of their heroes, the Emir Bashīr al-Shihābi, Mohammed Ali Pasha, Ibrahim Pasha, and Amīn Beğ”.

Kotzebue (1761–1819), who was known for his sentimental dramas. This sentimentality is reminiscent of the *Rührstücke* or melodramas that dominated German stages during the time of Goethe and Schiller, much to their dismay.

It is evident that both Zaydān's romances and Kotzebue's plays appealed to a bourgeoisie that had expanded to a larger social stratum. This bourgeoisie had gained more confidence in themselves and had become accustomed to self-glorification. Consequently, the "scenes of remorse, reconciliation, reunion, and renunciation featuring tearful mothers and deeply moved grumbling fathers", as described by Wilpert in reference to Kotzebue (Wilpert 1979, 707) might have exhibited a sense of routine or even triteness.

11.3 Ennobling language

The above survey of tearful passages in Zaydān's *al-Mamlūk al-shārid* has been interspersed with several quotations not without purpose. This was done, among other reasons, to prepare the ground for the following remarks, which will focus on the formal, linguistic aspects of this sentimentality. It is not hard to observe that the language used in these passages is very pathetic, and I believe that the frequency of tearful scenes in Arabic literature during this period can, to a certain degree, be explained also as an end in itself. In other words, one of the reasons for frequently engaging in lachrymose pathos is the opportunity it provides to temporarily depart from plain prose and adopt a more poetic style. But why should an intellectual like Jurjī Zaydān, who typically preferred a minimalistic, straightforward, and didactic writing style in his efforts to enlighten his contemporaries, would approve of infusing his prose with poetic touches through the inclusion of tearful passages within the main body of the text.

The reasons for him to do so may well have been similar to what favoured the predilection for 'poetical' settings in Europe during the emergence of the novel as a literary genre. In Europe, the novel emerged as a prose genre when the world itself had become, in a way, more 'prosaic' due to the collapse of the old order. In this new reality, man no longer felt at home, and things did not fit together neatly like rhymes anymore. With the "loss of poetical valence in form" accompanying the transition from poetic speech to prose, "the novel often sought compensation through highly 'poetical' plots involving lovers, artists, knights, brigands", and so on (Wilpert 1979, 692, s.v. "Roman", my translation). This desire for compensation stemmed from a longing for the lost poetic intensity in a prose-dominated world. Similarly, in the Arab world of the nineteenth century, the enthusiastic reception of literary prose can be attributed to a comparable revolution. The in-

trusion of the West and the numerous reforms that had already begun by the second half of the century to leave their mark in almost every sphere of life brought about a sense of loss in the world’s ‘orderliness’ and ‘poeticism’. Here, too, this loss was experienced as painful, and it was hoped that literature could offer compensation through poetical elements in an overall necessarily prosaic framework. How much the lost emotional intensity of poetry was longed for in a time when the reader could be reached already easier by prose can be seen from al-Manfalūṭī’s words, sounding paradoxical:

This time I want to be for you a poet without rhyme and without metre, for I wish to appeal directly to the heart; but this is not possible, unless by poetry.

(quoted in Nagīb 1983, 14)

Secondly, the preference given to *larmoyant* passages as something more poetical than ordinary prose can be understood in relation to the prevailing literary criticism of the time, which still gave primacy to poetry and the revered, elitarian word art of the *maqāmāt*. In the circles that dominated contemporary literary life, writing pure and simple prose was often looked down upon and considered too popular and inferior. (We hardly need to recall that when Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, as late as 1913, published his novel *Zaynab*, he chose to use a pseudonym out of fear that it might harm his career as a lawyer if it became known that he wrote novels.)

If as a prose author, you wanted to avoid condemnation from the literary establishment but at the same time wished to appeal to the expanding reading public, which included a broader and less elitist social stratum thanks to the increased access to education, you had to strike a delicate balance. This meant finding a middle ground between a plain, unadorned, unmannered, ‘prosaic’ style that would please the new army officers, engineers, technocrats, and bureaucrats – all those who had benefited from the educational system’s broader opportunities, among them an ever-increasing number of women – and, on the other hand, a style that would satisfy the expectations of the old elite still dominating the literary scene. Tears helped to solve this dilemma. Their emotional nature justified a more elevated and elaborate artistic mode of expression, and the more an author could incorporate tears into their work the more they would provide him/her with opportunities to showcase his/her prowess not only a prosaist, but also as someone well-versed in the use of the numerous linguistic and stylistic devices of classical Arabic rhetoric. In the small doses in which one was offered lexical brilliance and a poeticizing imagery here – portions that could be consumed without consulting a dictionary of linguistic rarities – those devices

naturally were highly estimated also by the reader: whoever read this kind of ennobled prose could claim that s/he was participating in literary life, and this was akin to being part of the educated elite or at least being equal to the old elite.

Thus, also from the poeticizing language of the lachrymose texts, or text passages, in question, conclusions on the sociological level can be drawn. We are faced here with a literature written by and for a class striving to attain a level of social prestige commensurate with their ever increasing number, a prestige, however, that was denied to them by the established elite, leading them to attempt to break the monopolies held by the old elite, such as their control over 'good' or 'high' literature.

Interestingly enough, parallels in the literature of European Enlightenment can be found on this purely formal linguistic level, too. In the so-called *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* (bourgeois 'tragedy'), for instance, the bourgeois 'appropriates' a literary genre, namely 'sublime' tragedy, from which they were previously excluded. During the Renaissance and Baroque periods, the bourgeoisie had been denied participation in tragedy and the realm of 'high' literature due to social standing restrictions, cf. the so-called *Ständeklausel* ("clause of social standing", see below; cf. Wilpert 1979, 782–3). Instead, the appearance of bourgeois characters on stage had been restricted to 'vulgar', 'inferior' comedy where they were confined to an existence as the object of popular amusement. It is most significant that the first thing the bourgeois does when he begins to emancipate himself, is that he starts weeping, and he does so in exactly that environment that still corresponds to his social and literary rank: comedy. The result is the transitional form labelled *comédie larmoyante* in France, *sentimental comedy* in England, and *weinerliches Lustspiel* in Germany. It is with the adoption of 'tragicality' via *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* that the eighteenth century bourgeoisie eventually gets completely rid of the odour of ridiculousness. This process of 'tragifying' the comical or ridiculous is obviously paralleled by the process, described above, of 'poeticisation' or 'poetification' of early Arabic prose, then still afflicted with the stain of wide popularity, with the help of tearful pathos; and the same process is at work when – like in eighteenth century Europe – those parts of the population who until then had been allowed to figure in nothing but the uncouth farces of popular theatre or in the *Karagöz* shadow plays, now invade the domain of the highly prestigious refined *adab*. In both cases a dignification of the common and the mean and, respectively, a popularisation of the elitarian takes place already on the linguistic surface of the texts in question.

It is clear, however, that the same phenomenon is also accompanied by a reevaluation with regard to content. The poetics of Renaissance and Baroque had established the *Ständeklausel* by pointing to the "height of fall" (*Fallhöhe*; cf.

Wilpert 1979, 262). The *Ständeklausel* implied that only kings, princes, or aristocrats were deemed ‘high’ enough in the social hierarchy to be in a position to suffer a really bad ‘tragic’ fall and thus be convincing in their tragedy; and it was only logical that the bourgeois, ranging much lower in the social hierarchy, according to this theory lacked the high position that was a prerequisite for making a deep fall, and so his miseries were *a priori* deprived of the chance of being classified as truly tragic. How could this bourgeoisie, in their eagerness to become socially accepted as part of the elite and wanting their needs to be acknowledged as tragic – how could they obtain for themselves the “height of fall” required for a tragic downfall? – The answer that both German *Empfindsamkeit* and *Nahḍa* sentimentalism found was very similar: they made themselves into aristocrats by replacing nobility of birth and wealth – something they did not possess – with *their* form of ‘nobility’, i.e., the nobility of feeling and thinking, the nobleness of virtue and high morals. As a consequence, they also could deny the old elite this new form of noblesse (which, from now on, would be the only true form).

Once again, exactly the same mechanism can be noticed to be at work in Arabic (and other Middle Eastern) literature, most significant perhaps in the works of al-Manfalūṭī. Let us have a closer look, for instance, at “*al-‘Iqāb*”, a story from a collection, published in 1915, bearing the title, meaningful in itself for our study, of *al-‘Abarāt* (The Tears). It has not been selected at random but because it seemed to me especially representative since the very same story, slightly different only in style and in some details of the plot, is to be found, as “*Ṣurākh al-qubūr*” (The Cry of the Graves), already in Jubrān’s short collection of 1908, *al-Arwāḥ al-mutamarrida* (Rebellious Spirits). I do not know whether al-Manfalūṭī was inspired by Jubrān’s story, or both of them drew on a third author;¹⁰ but this is irrelevant anyway for our purpose here.

More important is the story’s plot, which in both cases starts with a first-person narrator telling us about the terrible experiences he has been through in an imaginary town:

He happens to attend a public court session where an *amīr*, assisted by a priest and a judge, sentences three people to horrible deaths without giving them the opportunity to defend themselves. The following day, the narrator discovers the corpses of the three lying in the desert outside the town, totally mutilated. When he has just begun to philosophize on a world in which there is no justice and a society that, in face of the wrong, abides by passivity, three persons appear who seem to have been closely related to the executed persons

¹⁰ Al-Manfalūṭī’s story is said to have been modeled after an original American story entitled “The Cry of the Graves” (my edition of *al-‘Abarāt*, p. III, fn. 1). Is this “American story” Jubrān’s *Ṣurākh al-qubūr*, or was it the model for both Manfalūṭī’s and Jubrān’s narrative?

and have now come to bury their beloved. Each of them tells the narrator what had happened before: The executed poor old man had done nothing but to ask for alms in a monastery where he had worked before, but then had been driven away abruptly when he had become old and decrepit, alms that would have helped him save his family from imminent death of starvation; when he was denied the alms and kicked away he had taken with him a sack of corn, the minimum to which he should have been entitled because he had never been paid his last wages. Thus, what he committed has never been a case of genuine theft. In the same way, the girl who was stoned to death for having committed adultery is in reality not an adulteress at all, nor is the young man who was executed for alleged murder a cold-blooded murderer. The girl, the narrator learns from herself, had been engaged to the man she loved but was forced, after her father's death, to consent to marry the lecherous judge whom her uncle, an opportunist, considered a better match; not wanting to betray her truly beloved fiancée she had fled from home the evening before the wedding to the judge was due to take place; when the latter's myrmidons found her she had, in total distress, sought shelter at her former fiancée's place, and there she had been caught. – As for the man who had been crucified, he too actually was innocent: he had killed only to defend the honour of his sister whom the emir's tax collectors had wanted to take with them as a "deposit".

With regard to language and style, this story is again an example of the ennoblement of prose by tearful pathos and, implicitly, of exalting the common. To this corresponds, on the level of content, the fact that a formerly lower social class has – like the bourgeoisie in *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* – become worth of tragic and thereby begun to ennoble themselves compensatorily.

In the above story, the old and the young man, the girl, their relatives and/or their beloved, all represent that group of "wretched" and "unfortunate" (*al-ashqiya' fi l-dunya*) to whom al-Manfalūṭī explicitly dedicates his "Tears" (cf. *al-'Abarāt*, "al-ihdā") – those segments of the population who are most likely to identify strongly with protagonists who suffer, as they perceive themselves as victims in society. It may be difficult to judge whether the Arab masses of that time did indeed, or did not, suffer more than in earlier times; however, it can be taken for granted that education has made them more self-conscious and let them experience as wrong what perhaps would have been considered normal in the past: to have no say in politics but to be ruled autocratically; to be underprivileged as a native inhabitant of, say, Egypt as compared to the class of 'aristocrats' of Turko-Cirkessian origin, i.e., strangers, but also to the local feudal lords; to be exploited by a khedive who financed his Euromania through ever-increasing taxes; to be restricted by the censors in one's right to free expression of opinion; to be suppressed by the British occupation and to be misused, during World War I, by the invaders for their own ends; et cetera.

The tears that are shed in stories like "al-'Iqāb" / "Ṣurākh al-qubūr" no longer serve the purpose they did in the past, which was to evoke emotions of happiness,

nor is lachrymosity accompanied by a happy ending anymore, as used to be the case in al-Bustānī’s and Zaydān’s works. As we ventured into the twentieth century, particularly during the years surrounding World War I, these tears transformed into wailing expressions of suffering and became deeply emotive, and a sense of pity increasingly intertwined with the readers perception of the lingering good amidst immense suffering. – What then drew people to such literature? Why was it crucial for there to be suffering and evocation of sympathetic pity?

One plausible explanation for this phenomenon could be as follows: By presenting protagonists with a social background similar to that of the reading public, stories provided a sense of companionship to suffering, which is a common human experience. This created ample opportunities for readers to identify with the characters and their struggles. The ordinary individual, the proverbial ‘man in the street’, would easily recognise themselves and their own hardships and misery reflected in the heroes and their suffering. Remarkably, this process of identification finds a parallel in the European Enlightenment movement. An author like G. E. Lessing, for instance, in his famous theoretical treatise on drama, the so-called *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, postulated that literary heroes should be *mit uns von gleichem Schrot und Korne* (“of the same stamp as ourselves”, i.e., bourgeois) (cf. “75. Stück”).

As mentioned earlier, it is important to note that in both cases, another crucial factor was the inclusion of everyday suffering, which had previously been deemed too mundane for ‘high’ literature. By incorporating such suffering, it implicitly granted it the dignity of being allowed into the realm of literature, consequently offering recognition and esteem to these experiences. The acceptance of the man in the street furthermore finds its expression in the pity with which the narrator – always an auctorial narrator weeping in utmost sympathy with the heroes – meets the misery of the poor and destitute. -- It is worth mentioning, as a brief note on the margins, that for al-Manfalūṭī, this compassion or pity, *rahma*, occupies a role in both his literary theory and his works that is of equally central as is the concept of *Mitleid* (compassionate identification) in Lessing’s theory of *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*.

Another explanation for the prevalence of suffering in this kind of literature is that it elevated those who underwent such suffering to a higher status. By portraying the suffering of honest and virtuous individuals, their nobility of thought and moral superiority were emphasized. This emphasis on virtue and high moral standards had great significance, especially during the Enlightenment era when the bourgeoisie, in their pursuit of emancipation, had nothing to counter the upper-class nobility except their own virtuous qualities.

The same can be said for the mostly urban petty bourgeoisie that had considerably grown by that time and formed the target audience for authors like al-Manfalūṭī writes, but also for the lower strata of society in general. ‘Abd al-Muḥsin Ṭāhā Badr, for instance, quotes a novel by Maḥmūd Khayrat in which a simple girl from the countryside, who is in love with the son of a pasha and suffers from the fact that he will always remain out of reach for her, due to their social disparity, says the following:

It is true, indeed, that I am not equal to him with respect to my social rank; however, in my bosom I carry a love that is so pure and sincere that it alone is sufficient to elevate me to a higher plane and a superior position.

(*al-Fatāt al-rifīyya*, 1903, quoted in Badr 1977, 170)

Like in eighteenth century German literature (see, for instance, Lessing’s *Emilia Galotti*, 1772), Manfalūṭī/Jubrān’ian heroes too monopolize Virtue for themselves. For the men of Enlightenment, the set of moral values prevailing in the bourgeois world is made up not only of virtue, but also of faithfulness and veracity and, especially during the *Sturm und Drang* period, also intensity and honesty of sincere feeling; it is opposed there to the domain of Nobility which is shown to be a realm of depravity, lasciviousness and lecherous vice, of insincerity and lies as well as of malicious intriguing (see, e.g., Schiller’s *Kabale und Liebe*, 1784, where already the title makes clear which moral principles will clash in this drama). Al-Manfalūṭī’s world is not much different, at most a bit clumsier perhaps, and the author also less critical of himself and his own class. Contemporary politics and their representatives are, by the way, experienced by al-Manfalūṭī, and probably likewise by his readers, as something belonging to the domain of vice and intriguing; in his and his public’s opinion, staying away from politics is therefore considered as a prerequisite of remaining virtuous – and also untouched in their newly acquired ideal nobility:

Would you, dearest sir, ever think that a man who has devoted his life to the service of Truth, set for himself the task of defending it against all injustice, and to save Virtue from the claws of Vice [...], a man who, in his messages, has let his weeping about the weak and the poor, the oppressed and the victims of injustice be heard in heaven and on earth, [would you think for only a moment that such a man] could be(come) a politician or a lawyer?

(*al-Nazarāt*, quoted by Nagīb 1983, 49)¹¹

¹¹ Nagīb gives “11/73” as page reference for his edition of the *Nazarāt*. I was not able to track down this passage in my copy of another edition (see References) but found a chapter on “*al-Siyāsa*” that is very similar in tone (cf. this other edition, II: 78–81).

It is a common observation that the role of moral judge is often assumed by those who lack actual power. These individuals may demand their fair share of authority, yet simultaneously decline to take on the responsibilities and burdens that come with it.

It is worth noting that during al-Manfalūṭī's time, the 'bourgeoisie vs. nobility' opposition of the European Enlightenment became even more complex. Not only was there a reinforced divide between the general public, the masses, the 'common people' (*‘amma*), and the privileged elite (*khāṣṣa*), but there was also a stark division between the natives and the European occupiers. The native population also sought to elevate themselves in this context. It was an era in which the East, in the eyes of the native population, became the abode of noble and vibrant "spirituality" (*rūḥiyya*), while the West was perceived as the dwelling place of base and cold materialism (*māddiyya*). This shift can be seen as analogous to the transition from the Enlightenment to *Sturm und Drang* periods in the history of German literature.

11.4 In conclusion

I believe that the aforementioned examples serve to demonstrate that a comparative analysis of nineteenth and early twentieth century Arabic literature alongside texts from the European Enlightenment, *Empfindsamkeit*, and *Sturm und Drang* periods can offer a deeper understanding of the concept of lachrymosity, surpassing the use of a blanket term such as 'Romanticism'. While the latter may be applicable in certain instances, it fails to capture the essence of literary works by authors like Salīm al-Bustānī, Jurjī Zaydān, and Muṣṭafā Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī, who represent a distinctive literary output predating the emergence of what is commonly known as the "artistic novel".

In the works of these authors, one will struggle to find elements characteristically associated with the Romantic movement in Europe, such as the sublimation of the creative ego into the universal and elemental, the phenomenon of 'Romantic irony' with its playful freedom and realisation of the unbridgeable gap between the finite and infinite, or the belief in existence as an everlasting process of development and change, and the individual as an expression of the infinite. While Romanticism did exhibit a tendency to aestheticize life and literature, the intention behind al-Manfalūṭī's and other so-called 'Romantics' poeticisation of their texts can hardly be explained as a phenomenon striving to convert the real world into a function of the infinite (the soul, the *Geist*), nor is al-Manfalūṭī's 'poeticity' intended as a means to break up and overcome traditional forms in order to attain internal universality, or pursue similar objectives.

In conclusion, it is preferable to refrain from using terms like ‘Romantic’ when discussing lachrymosity, as it seems more fitting to draw parallels with similar phenomena in eighteenth-century European literature. However, at first glance, it may seem challenging to extend these parallels to the concept of secularisation, which played a pivotal role in eighteenth-century Europe. After all, is al-Manfalūṭī not closely connected to *religious* thinkers like Muḥammad ‘Abduh, and does he not express explicitly *Islamic* viewpoints in his stories and essays? – Appearances can be deceiving, and it is worth noting that many figures of the European Enlightenment were devout believers as well. Even a key representative of *Empfindsamkeit* like the poet Klopstock extols, in his *Messias*, the salvation of mankind through Jesus Christ in solemn hexameters. The clearly religious appearance notwithstanding, signs of secularisation can be discerned in Klopstock’s works too, such as his portrayal of earthly friendship as something “holy” or his talking about a “temple” of joy. It should also be mentioned that Klopstock’s admirers would gather around him like a religious community rallying around their Messiah, elevating the poet to the status of a ‘prophet’ and viewing his words as a ‘revelation’. Similarly, a closer examination of al-Manfalūṭī’s writings reveals several features that can be compared to expressions of secularisation, reminiscent of those just mentioned.

For instance, when al-Manfalūṭī depicts “martyrs”, these *shuhadā’* are not *shuhadā’* who lost their lives *fī sabīl Allāh*, but rather for the sake of faithfulness, virtue, honour, and other noble (but worldly) ideals. Contemporary accounts of individuals memorizing sayings by al-Manfalūṭī frequently employ the term *āyāt* for these sayings – typically used to refer to Quranic “verses”, the word appears in a much more ‘profane’ context here. If it is indeed true that one could find one or more of al-Manfalūṭī’s works in almost every household of the time, could this not be seen as a clear manifestation of secularisation, akin to the shift from reliance on a single book, the Bible, to a broader embrace of literature as a whole during the European Enlightenment?

Drawing on Nagi Naguib’s observation that ‘Manfalūṭism’ possessed an “alluring mystical touch” (*lamḥa ṣūfiyya jadhdhāba*), one might even venture to interpret the Manfalūṭiyya as a secularised form of mysticism, analogous to the reading of Pietism as a secularised *Empfindsamkeit*. Both Islamic Ṣūfism and European Pietism, being rooted in personal experience and emotion, stand in contrast to rationalism and dry doctrine. In a similar vein, Manfalūṭism, along with *Empfindsamkeit* and *Sturm und Drang*, represents a reaction against increasing rationalism, emerging as a movement that opposes Reason as venerated by Enlightenment thinkers and Nahḍa reformers alike.

Part V: **The Nahḍa at its zenith**

Nation building and “Yes, we can!” enthusiasm

12 A manifesto of early *adab qawmī*

ʿĪsā ʿUbayd’s programmatic preface to “Miss Ihsan” – Introduction and translation

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This chapter: While Parts III and IV above were still mainly concerned with the nineteenth century, dealing with genre transitions and various aspects of the emerging subjects’ wish to assert themselves, we move on now, with Part V, to the twentieth century, looking at “The Nahḍa at its zenith” in the period shortly before and immediately following the First World War. We will meet in this section subjects who no longer believe in a future within the political framework of the Ottoman Empire but take the need to build a new type of community – the nation state – for granted.

In the chapter below we are going to listen directly (albeit in English translation) to the discussion about the then current state of affairs, and conclusions to be drawn from its analysis, as described and suggested by ʿĪsā ʿUbayd, one of the members of the Egyptian “Modern School” (*al-Madrasa al-Ḥadītha*), a group of writers who aspired to create a genuinely Egyptian “national literature” (*adab qawmī*). In Chapters 13 and 14 we will become acquainted with two other (and more prominent) members of this group, Maḥmūd Taymūr (1894–1973) and Maḥmūd Ṭāhir Lāshīn (1894–1954), and in Chapter 15 with one of their Turkish counterparts, Reşat Nuri (Reşad Nūri) Güntekin (1889–1956).

The four chapters in this section, Part V, are meant to shed light on the identity-seeking *national* subject from various angles. In the chapter below (Chapter 12), my translation of ʿUbayd’s programmatic foreword to a collection of modern Egyptian short stories (published in 1921) is intended as a presentation of the universe of theoretical thinking about the project of a “national literature” in its whole breadth, unshortened and as directly as possible (original terminology is provided amply in Romanized transcription in footnotes). The presentation of ʿUbayd’s ideas is followed, in Chapter 13, by an overview of the life and work of the most prolific member of the Modern School, Maḥmūd Taymūr, often called the “father” of the Egyptian short story. As a literary biography, the chapter can/should be read as complementary to ʿUbayd’s *muqaddima*, i.e., as an exemplary illustration of the background such a theoretical text would have in the life

trajectory of a contemporary writer/*adīb* (note that Taymūr published a very similar programmatic foreword himself only a few years after ‘Ubayd¹), and also of how one of the authors of the group ‘translated’ the theoretical program into concrete texts. Chapter 14 will then ‘zoom in’ on one specific piece of short fiction, “A Ghost Story” (*Qiṣṣat ‘ifrit*) by Maḥmūd Ṭāhir Lāshīn, an author who has not become as famous as Maḥmūd Taymūr, although with him the art of short story writing certainly reached a new and unprecedented quality (as already remarked by Sabry Hafez who saw in Lāshīn the mature culmination of the evolution of literary discourse since the nineteenth century).²

While the Lāshīn chapter also will return to the question, raised already above on several occasions, of periodisation and coevalness with other ‘global’ developments, the chapter on Güntekin’s *Çalikuşu* (“The Wren”) of 1924 (Chapter 15) will study another specimen of “national literature”, this time from Turkey,³ and this time also much more prominent and influential than Taymūr’s, ‘Ubayd’s or Lāshīn’s stories, as *Çalikuşu* became a ‘bestseller’ of the newly founded Turkish Republic – evidently, it captured the spirit of the time in an exemplary manner. The focus in the *Çalikuşu* chapter will be on the question of gendering, as this will reveal in a highly interesting (and perhaps also surprising) way the anxieties and vulnerability of the newly emerged ‘national subject’, aspects that may easily be overlooked if one only attends to the surface of the then current ‘Yes, we can!’ optimism propagated by the early nation-builders.

The ‘national subjects’ we encounter in Part V are easily recognisable as extensions of the earlier Nahḍawī subjects we met in Parts III and IV. For the nation-builders, who still see themselves as the *guides*⁴ in an *overall renaissance* (now the *nation’s* guides, teachers, doctors, etc.) and *revolution of thinking*, it is still – and in an era of *big* (national) *awakening* perhaps even more than before – the overall goal (and even *duty*) to attain a state of *civilisation*; in order to reach this, one has to continue on the path of *progress*, which includes not only scientific, technological and medical progress, but also *social reform* and a *refinement of morals*, always aiming to become and remain ‘modern’, keeping pace with the spirit of *modernity* (*ḥadātha*) and maintaining a civilisational level that is felt to be ‘universal’, built on *eternal human constituents*.

¹ In Maḥmūd Taymūr, *al-Shaykh Jum‘a, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā* (1925).

² Hafez 1993, chs. 6 and 7.

³ Other early Republican texts from Turkey are portrayed below, in Chapter 19.

⁴ In the following, *italics* will point to key terminology used by ‘Ubayd in his *Muqaddima* (for the corresponding Arabic terms, cf. footnote section below as well as the word cloud at the end of the translation).

The author of the programmatic foreword is aware of obstacles that are to be overcome on the way to progress, but the general mood speaking from ‘Ubayd’s *Muqaddima* is that of a powerful, energetic, lively, enthusiastic, almost exuberant, passionate optimism, nourished by a belief in *Life* as a fundamental principle governing the world. The *passion* that Khalil al-Khūrī had begun to call for in the early 1860s (cf. above, Chapter 9) has now gained momentum and turned into a passion for the new nation-to-be, integrating additional influences from Bergsonian philosophy with its irrational belief in the organic impulses of a power called *Life*. This implies a focus on the (living) *present*, not the (dead) *past*, and the conviction that this *Life* is so *vital* and *strong* that all *stagnation* and the *morbid, inorganic sterility* of dated and *static* tradition will soon be swept away.

The subjectivity that now seeks to assert itself is not so much the personal self that Khalil al-Khūrī meant when he stressed the importance of the “independent self” (see above, Chapters 4 and 9), but rather that of its complementary counterpart in the ‘dualism of selves’ observed by Sheehi in Jurjī Zaydān’s *al-Mamlūk al-shārid* (see above, introductory section to Chapter 11); rather, it is the subjectivity of the new collective ‘*national self*’ in all its *individuality, uniqueness* and *local/regional specificity*, with its own, *national* (here: *Egyptian* and *Oriental*) *personality/character* or *temperament, mentality, tastes, social, emotional* and *moral life, customs, and traditions*. And this is also the reason why the new “national literature”, the creation of which is seen as a “*holy duty*” (note the quasi-religious, now secularised fervour!), should clearly be imprinted by *local colour* – a postulate that according to ‘Ubayd for many of his writer colleagues even implied the use of the Egyptian *vernacular*, the real ‘national language’, in literary discourse (a position ‘Ubayd himself is reluctant to support in full; he rather favours an “*intermediate*” language, a *lughā mutawassīṭa*).

A Nahḍawī spirit also speaks from the methods with which writers, according to ‘Ubayd, should approach the world. As a *rational* subject, the national subject, too, *observes* and *critically analyses* the world as its object, and it does so based on *science* and informed by, or with the aim to produce, plausible *theories*. (The sciences that ‘Ubayd considers most relevant for the project of analysing the *national character* and the Egyptian *temperament* are *psychology, genetics* and *naturalist-positivist theories* about the influence of *climate* and *social milieu* on the human *psyche*.) As quasi-scientists, the earlier Nahḍawī subjects and the new national subjects alike are eager to obtain *truth*, care for *genuineness, accurateness, exactitude, precision, thoroughness*, and the reliability of *evidence*, and it goes almost without saying that this requires that one sticks to the *facts*, to *life as it is*, and that one as a writer turns away from ‘romantic’ idealism and rather takes a *factualist* approach (*madhhab al-waqā’i*), i.e., *realism*. Therefore, in order to

serve as a reliable basis for a *better understanding* of one's fellow human beings and for a *reform of society*, literature has to *describe, portray, depict, record, register* real life (like in a *dossier*) *without unrealistic exaggeration or reduction*; the *facts* have to be exposed *unembellished, pure and naked*, if necessary even in all their *ugliness* and *crudeness*. Here, also *art* and writing *technique* come in: For the intellectual subject speaking from 'Ubayd's foreword, fantasy and creativity play a lesser role than, e.g., for the "creativists" of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century (Jubrān, for instance). Nevertheless, they have high aesthetic ambitions: In order to become accepted as a truly civilised nation, the literary production of the new national subject will not only have to be unquestionably genuine, local, authentic, but it will also have to comply with the highest standards of *sophisticated* modern story-telling (as set, first and foremost, by French writers like Daudet, Balzac, Flaubert, Hugo, Zola and, above all, Maupassant). Mastering advanced narrative *technique*, especially that of short stories and novels, and reaching *maturity* in the production of such literature will ensure, it is believed, universal validity of the own, the local, by which the local national subject hopes to be accepted as human subject in general.

* * *

ʿĪsā ʿUbayd is a short story writer and literary critic of Syrian descent.⁵ Little is known about his life, not even when exactly he was born. Together with his brother, Shaḥāta ʿUbayd, the two must have come to Egypt in the early 1900s, where they became active in cultural life, supporting the emerging national movement and enthusiastically promoting a new "national literature" (*adab qawmī*) after the 1919 revolt had filled them with hope and optimism. ʿĪsā started his short literary career in 1920 with the publication of a story in *al-Sufūr* and was able to bring out two collections, *Iḥsān Hānim* (1921) and *Thurayyā* (1922), before he died, apparently at an early age⁶ (his brother lived until 1961). The Preface, or Prolegomena ("Muqaddima") to *Iḥsān Hānim*, in which the author elaborates on his ideas about realism in literature, is a highly interesting essay in literary criticism. It is especially interesting as a document from within the inner circle of the Modern School who were the main motor behind the creation of what was to become *the* main trend in twentieth century Arabic fiction: national literature and mimetic realism.

⁵ Yūsuf al-Shārūnī, "ʿĪsā ʿUbayd", in al-Sakkūt, ed. 2015, 543–44. – Cf. also De Moor 1998d, with further references.

⁶ Hafez holds that ʿUbayd died "prematurely in his twenties" (1993, 179 ff.). If this is true we can assume that the author was born sometime in the 1890s.

Given the fact that ʿUbayd’s “Muqaddima” has already been discussed by Sabry Hafez in some detail in his *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse*,⁷ I have refrained from adding yet another study but rather preferred to let the text speak *itself* and make this manifesto – which certainly can be seen in line with other visions on art at about the same time⁸ – accessible to a non-Arabophone public. Of particular interest for further research (which would connect to recent trends in re-writing an intellectual history of the Nahḍa)⁹ could be, for instance, a study about the origins of ʿUbayd’s ideas about race, milieu, climate, the ‘national character’, etc., but also a linguistic investigation into the conceptual terminology of the manifesto. For the latter reason, and also in order to make my own terminological choices transparent and let the reader who is familiar with Arabic get an idea of the original Arabic text and its peculiarities, I documented the translation process quite extensively in footnotes.

ʿĪsā ʿUbayd’s Preface to *Iḥsān Hānim*

Kalima ʿan al-fann wa-l-adab al-ḥadīth fī Miṣr (A Word about Modern Art and Literature in Egypt)

One

The art of story-writing¹⁰ in Egypt is a newly-born art that has not yet obtained in the minds of our contemporary writers the prestige/presence/prominent place it deserves, because they are so occupied with producing or Arabizing¹¹ theatrical¹²

7 Hafez 1993, 179 ff.

8 One may think of Walter Gropius’ “Bauhaus Manifesto and Program” of 1919 or André Breton’s two manifestos about the Surrealist movement, issued in 1924 and 1929.

9 Cf., e.g., Hanssen and Weiss, eds. 2016.

10 *al-fann al-qaṣaṣī* (or perh. better: *qīṣaṣī*): Given that (oral) storytelling has a long tradition in the Middle East and I don’t think that the author completely ignored this, I rendered the expression with ‘story-writing’ or (further down) with ‘narrative prose’.

11 *taʿrīb* ‘Arabizing’: means ‘translation into Arabic’, which often rather implies an ‘adaptation’ of the plot to the domestic context than a translation in the contemporary sense where – an ideally congenial – faithfulness vis-à-vis the original is the desired norm.

12 The author still uses the adj. *marṣaḥī* rather than the more modern *masraḥī*, with metathesis.

plays¹³ that, for us [sc. Egyptian writers], dramatic art almost comes before story-writing, in contrast to [the situation] in **France** where **Balzac, Flaubert, Zola** and **Daudet** have created **narrative prose** after **pictures taken from life**,¹⁴ built/based on minute **observation**, faithful **analysis** and **scientific theory**,¹⁵ while only hollow, weak, and [totally] **fantastic** plots¹⁶ had been staged in their [sc. the Frenchmen's] theatres. As a result, and thanks to their powerful and mature works, they [sc. the French] have been able to purify their stages and to liberate them from [the grip of] the lariat of silly childish expressions.

The reason for our [sc. Egypt's] writers' preoccupation with theatre and their neglect of **narrative prose** lies in the fact that theatre better guarantees them material profit and prestige in the literary scene¹⁷ and that the paper crisis brought about by the war¹⁸ put an end to almost all printing activity and prevented the writers from composing [prose] stories. But there are also other factors, as, e.g., the Egyptian writer's inclination and psychological disposition, both of which make him abstain from risking to put too much hope into the advancement/**progress** of this genre in our country as quickly as he would desire [he does not grow this hope]; for the hot **climate** has cultivated in the Egyptian writer the instinct for **fantasy** to an astonishing extent; the bad effect of this **fantasy** namely makes itself felt now in every Egyptian plot¹⁹ in that it avoids **depicting real life**. Moreover, restrictive eastern traditions [gender segregation!] prohibit nearly [any] meeting/encounter among the sexes and [in this way] contribute to intensifying his [sc. the Egyptian writer's] severe psychological dilemmas. On the one hand, he cannot know these dilemmas and the moral development triggered by them in the **human psyche**, and as a consequence it is only natural that he is unable to depict that in his heroes. On the other hand, he is not yet trained in [the technique of] **observation** and **psychological analysis**, which are two skills²⁰ that only grow with long experience. So, when he tries to write a novel he usually does not have the skill to endow his characters with an individual personality, and they appear to be soulless phantoms for us. When he, for

13 Lit., 'accounts, reports' (*riwāyāt*). For the author's variable use of the term *riwāya*, cf. also below, notes 16, 19, 69, 71, 73, 100, 130, 135, 152, 168, 184 and 195.

14 *ṣuwar al-ḥayāh*: could also mean various *forms* of life.

15 Lit., 'views' (*naẓarāt*).

16 *riwāyāt*: see n. 4, above.

17 This is probably what is meant by *li-fā'idati-him al-māddiyya wa-l-adabiyya* – or would it be more appropriate to render *fā'ida adabiyya* as 'moral benefit'?

18 I.e., WW I.

19 *riwāya*: see above, note 13 (with further cross-references).

20 *malakatayn*

instance, wants to describe a young man who whispers “the eternal song of youth” into his beloved’s ear, you see him making use of **fantasy**, guessing and **mannerism**; he lets the lover address his beloved with expressions that are devoid of **individuality**,²¹ as, for example, when he describes to her the beauty of nature and the twittering of the birds, the song of the doves and the murmuring of the water, and similar silly pubertal stuff²² and **weak, morbid** sentiments; typically this does away with the characters’ **[individual] personality**²³ and deprives them of the element of **vitality**.²⁴

Therefore, it is the writer’s task to first study the **temperament**²⁵ of a character of his because it will greatly influence the way he will describe a human being’s **emotions** and **character** [or: morals].²⁶ The temperament may for instance be the reason for a person’s happiness or sadness. A melancholic pessimist who doubts in everything, even the sincerity of the feelings of the woman he loves and who loves him, will always be haunted by painful conflicting thoughts. When he meets his beloved he will not talk to her about the trees, birds and flowers, but maybe about his thoughts and pains, to the degree that he may charge her with moral depravity and shamelessness²⁷ or accuse her of not loving him anymore and looking at another one; she will then first try gently to exonerate herself from what he accuses her of, then she will eventually become angry because of his unrelenting insistence that she is a guilty criminal (while she actually loves him truly and faithfully). Her noble and just anger may then sometimes bring her to the point where she drops some injuring, insulting expressions, which in turn may lead to the two separating forever! So, what a difference between such a heated quarrel and that smooth and quiet lyrical flirting [that we find in the romanticists’ books]!

Furthermore, it is also the writer’s task to study in his characters the **genetic influences** they have inherited from their fathers and through their **race** (?),²⁸ and to **analyze** the **milieu**²⁹ factors and living conditions that have contributed to the **formation of their personalities**, so that he will show us the **emotions**³⁰

21 *khuṣūṣiyya*: also ‘specificity, individual feature’.

22 *sakhafāt ṣibyāniyyat*

23 *shakhṣiyyat al-ashkhāṣ*

24 *ʿunṣur al-ḥayāh*

25 *mazāj*

26 *takyīf ʿawāṭif al-insān wa-akhlāq ʿhī*

27 *al-khalāʿa wa-l-tahattuk*

28 *jinsiyya*

29 *wasat*

30 *mashāʿir*

that they [really] can have. The way a fifteen-year old youth loves is of course³¹ different from the love of twenty-five- or thirty-five-year olds, and that person's love is also different from that of an old man.³² In a similar vein, also the **living circumstances** have a huge impact on the **maturation** of a human being's feelings: many a youth of eighteen may love like a strong, emotionally mature man, while a mature young man may only be capable of loving as purely and naively³³ as a child.

Whenever a writer studies his characters' **temperament** and **natural disposition**³⁴ it will be very easy for him to describe them without being forced to make use of cold and boring **mannerism**,³⁵ and this will also allow him to get inspired³⁶ by their characters³⁷ for [the description of] a **genuinely human** event in his narrative,³⁸ [an event] that may result naturally from their temperament and personality, without having recourse to [too much] **fantasy** to imagine what it may look like.³⁹

Two

On the basis of the preceding it is thus evident that the Egyptian writer definitively must have a comprehensive overview of **psychology** to acquire a **thorough understanding of human nature**. In our opinion, the Egyptian author has not so far taken into account its [sc. **psychology**'s] principles, neither in writing (styles) nor in the way he forms the personality of his various characters. It is not our aim in this brief preface to study what is wrong with the Egyptian writer, or his mental diseases – we have attempted to study all this in a book that we are going to publish separately.⁴⁰ We are presenting here only a few of these deficiencies so that somebody who finds in himself the talent to

31 Or: 'by nature'?, or: 'in nature, essentially'? (*ṭab^{am}*)

32 *shaykh*

33 *al-ḥubb al-ṭāhir al-iḥsās*

34 *ṭabī'a*

35 *al-takalluf al-saqīm al-bārid*

36 *yaqtabis*

37 Or: 'moral disposition and behaviour'? (*akhlāq*).

38 *ḥāditha riwā'iyya insāniyya maḥḍa*

39 *lā dakhla lil-khayāl fī takyīf^l hā*

40 It is not clear which book 'Ubayd is talking about here – perhaps the same as the one he mentions below (see n. 155)?

create [prose] stories, may become acquainted with them⁴¹ and [try to] repair/attenuate them,⁴² and [in this way] may help us introduce this new literary genre into Egyptian literature⁴³ of our time.

Also, the (to our knowledge) most important defect after those, referred to above, of **[excessive] fantasy**, lack of **observation** and absence of **[psychological] analysis**, is the lack⁴⁴ of talent to **describe** and **illustrate**.⁴⁵ **Depiction** of the places where the characters have grown up is among the most important requirements for this art, precisely because it will affect the way of designing their thoughts and feelings. An **accurate** and **vivid description** also will have a great mental impact on the reader, as it allows the reader to feel the credibility of a story taken from life and the truth of the existence of the people portrayed by nature.⁴⁶

The reason for the Egyptian writer's weakness in the field of depiction lies in his lack of training in, or ignorance of, the basic principles of **real art**. If he, for example, has found a beautiful place, he will not try to draw it on a paper as he sees it; rather, he will presume that nature cannot be so beautiful by its own artistically appealing/tangible beauty;⁴⁷ instead, he will want to make it still more beautiful, thereby relying on [too much] fantasy, so that he will produce a **sterile, unclear, weak** picture of it, a picture of which nothing will remain when we will try to recall it: it will leave no impression on our minds.⁴⁸ In contrast, **[real] art** does not simply aim, as some people imagine, at a beautification of nature and a perfection of the souls in order to highlight a sublime beauty, bare of all defects; rather, it may also lie in the depiction of the **naked, crude, unembellished facts**.

41 Lit., 'get used to them': *yata'ahhad^a-hā* (sc. the deficiencies).

42 *yuhadhdhib^a-hā*

43 *ādāb* may well mean more than just 'literature' here, perhaps 'culture', 'literary culture', or 'cultural life'. – See also below, note 49.

44 Lit., 'weakness'.

45 *malakat al-waṣf wa-l-taṣwīr*

46 Hafez renders this paragraph – the only one he reproduces in full English translation – as follows: "Apart from the lack of creative imagination, inadequate observation and the absence of analysis, there is the weakness of description and illustrative ability. The description of the setting from which the characters emerge is one of the most important requirements of fictional art, because it has a tremendous effect on forming their characteristics and feelings. Furthermore, the vivid narrative and the use of accurate realistic description have a strong impact on the reader, for they convince him of the truthfulness of the story and of its relevance to real life." – Hafez 1993, 179.

47 *laysat jamīla^{tan} jamāl^a-hā al-ḥissī al-fannī*

48 Lit., 'our mind will leave [the scene] as empty as it was before reading it'.

This new way in which we define art will create a literature⁴⁹ based on reality⁵⁰ that will be completely different from yesterday's literature, and from here a whole variety of literary genres⁵¹ and writing styles⁵² will emerge, which will enhance further **development**⁵³ in modern literature the advancement of that which had been stopped by our blind, stiff and stupid imitation of ancient Arabic literature⁵⁴ and the emulation of the ancient Arabs' imagery,⁵⁵ similes, metaphors, rhetoric embellishments⁵⁶ and expressive language.⁵⁷

The Egyptian writer's inclination to make nature more refined⁵⁸ and paint it with pure beauty and prettiness is like an instinct, it permeates every line he writes. In order to support our argument, it will suffice to have just a short look at one of our authors. Has not Mr. Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī,⁵⁹ the greatest of today's writers, in an attempt to render Alphonse Karr's⁶⁰ novel *Sous l'ombre des tilleuls*⁶¹ into Arabic, turned it into a **romantic fantasy**⁶² after he had severely butchered⁶³ "Stéphen"'s character?! We do not criticize/reprimand him⁶⁴ for this because we count ourselves among those who respect this man even though his style of storytelling and way of

49 *ādāb* – the word means more than just 'literature' or 'writings' here, it comprises a whole 'literary culture' (see above, note 43), thereby retaining the general ethic dimension of 'culture' inherent in classical *adab*.

50 Lit., 'the facts', *al-ḥaqā'iq*.

51 *anwā' adabiyya*

52 The term used here is *madhāhib*, pl. of *madhhab* 'way of doing s.th.; school, trend'.

53 *raqy* or *ruqīyy*, vn. of *raqiya* 'to ascend, climb, rise, advance'. From the same root *r-q-y*, the vn. of form V, *taraqqī*, is the Nahḍa's standard term used to render the notion of 'progress, rise, progressive development'.

54 Here, too, *adab* may mean more than just 'literature', cf. notes 43 and 49 above.

55 *khayāl* – could also be 'imagination'.

56 *al-muḥassināt al-badī'iyya*

57 *al-'ibārāt al-lughawiyya*

58 *tahdhīb* – the term is often also used in connection with morals: *tahdhīb al-akhlāq* 'refinement of morals, cultivation of character'; therefore, it would perhaps not be too far-fetched to translate *tahdhīb al-ṭabī'a* with 'making nature more civilised'.

59 Muṣṭafā Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī (1877–1924), the foremost exponent of the sentimental, emotional trend in early twentieth century Egyptian prose.

60 French author, lived 1808–1890.

61 "Under the Shadows of the Acacia Tree" (1832), rendered into Arabic as *Majdūlīn, aw Taḥṭā zīlāl al-zayzafūn* (1917) by L. M. al-Manfalūṭī.

62 *khayālīyya shī'riyya*

63 *qaḍā' alā*

64 *nu'ākhidh^u-hū*

composition differs from ours – [unlike him] we call for a diversity/multitude of literary genres and writing trends/schools⁶⁵ to make modern literature more lively.⁶⁶ But isn’t the fact that he modifies the personality of the characters⁶⁷ and makes heavy changes⁶⁸ to the plot⁶⁹ an indication of his submission to the regime of his **oriental temperament** which urges him to depict [nothing but] human perfection and the highest ideals of spiritual love? Moreover, should not al-Manfalūṭī’s deliberate choice to [considerably] shorten⁷⁰ the plot⁷¹ of *Cyrano de Bergerac*⁷² – this [highly] idealistic imaginative/romantic story⁷³ – be regarded as sufficient proof of the presence, in Egyptian authors,⁷⁴ of a hidden inclination to show [nothing but] impeccable beauty and sublime perfection, both of which are as remote from reality as heaven is from earth?

This psychological inclination will push Egyptian writers in the direction of the **emotionalist/sentimentalist approach**,⁷⁵ [i.e.] **idealism**,⁷⁶ and it will obstruct new developments in **modern**⁷⁷ literature. For, in our opinion, tomorrow’s literature will be erected on the pillars of **observation** and **psychological analysis**,⁷⁸ both of which aim to **portray life as it is, without exaggeration or reduction**, i.e.,

65 *taʿaddud al-anwāʿ al-adabiyya wa-l-madhāhib al-kitābiyya*

66 Lit., ‘to bring the elements of life to modern literature’.

67 Or: ‘the main character’? – *shakhṣiyyat al-ashkhāṣ*, lit. ‘the character of the characters’.

68 *taḥrīf*⁶⁸-*hū* ... *hādhā l-taḥrīf*

69 *riwāya* – cf. above, note 13 (with further cross-references).

70 *talkhiṣ*

71 *riwāya* – cf. above, note 13 (with further cross-references).

72 Originally a five-act play (publ. 1897) by the French writer Edmond Rostand (1868–1918), “Arabized” by al-Manfalūṭī as *al-Shāʿir*, aw *Sirānū dī Birjarāk* (Cairo 1921; various later editions).

73 *al-riwāya al-khayālīyya al-wijdāniyya*

74 *al-kātib al-miṣrī* is not preceded by a demonstrative pronoun like *hādhā* here. Therefore, we assume that ʿUbayd refers to “the” Egyptian writer *in general*, not specifically al-Manfalūṭī.

75 *madhhab al-wijdāniyyāt*

76 ʿUbayd gives the foreign word here, *al-idyālism*.

77 *ʿaṣrī*

78 Perhaps, *al-taḥlīl al-nafsī* should even be rendered as ‘psychoanalysis’ here. Given ʿUbayd’s positivist-scientistic approach, the term may not only mean the study of a person’s character but already an established scientific discipline. Sabry Hafez, however, would not think so: “The emphasis on psychology and psychoanalysis can be understood only in their literary sense and not as a specialized knowledge of the subject. They are meant as an interest in the character’s psyche through artistic and intuitive insight into the personality and its motivation for the action action” – Hafez 1993, 293 (n. 86).

life **pure and naked**, and that is what is called the **factualist approach**,⁷⁹ or **realism**.⁸⁰ Therefore, [we expect that] a tough battle will break out between the followers of the old school, **Emotionalism/Sentimentalism**, who are the majority, and the supporters of Factualism, who are [still only] a few in whose hearts/souls new driving forces/incentives⁸¹ have found their way as a result of their acquaintance with the manifold and lively varieties of **art in the West**. This is why it was painful for them to see that their [own] literature was lying in **agony** and **stagnating**,⁸² and this is why they wanted to breathe new life into it, so strong as to destroy the thick bonds and the boring conditions that our ancestors had designed for us. Which of the two groups will possibly be victorious?

As for us, we are convinced that the Factualists/Realists⁸³ will succeed although they are so few in number and that they will defeat their powerful opponents,⁸⁴ but only after severe suffering and a long time, for the Egyptian people is, first and foremost, a **conservative** people, **attached to tradition**.⁸⁵ They adore their past and venerate/sanctify what the forefathers have created, in the erroneous assumption that what their Arab ancestors have produced is the optimum of creative perfection that one cannot but take as an example to follow with respect and deference. Since the Egyptian people have such an optimistic opinion about their habits and customs,⁸⁶ they believe in the purity of these and the solidity of their holy/venerable inherited tradition. Therefore, the brutal, dry and bitter truth will cause them pain, and they will rise in protest against anyone who dares to portray it [as it is], refusing this and trying to show that it is a lie, [just] in order to keep their sweet dreams.

However, we are living [now] through an **era of a big awakening**,⁸⁷ induced by our **national movement**. It is common for such an awakening that it brings about a reversal of customs and tradition and a change in orientations and thinking.⁸⁸ Such an influence has [already] appeared clearly in the writing of many of the writers of the new emerging generation: they've made it clear to us that they are

79 *madhhab al-ḥaqā'iq*

80 'Ubayd gives the foreign word here, *al-riyālism*.

81 *'awāmil jadīda*

82 *jumūd ādābi-him al-muḥtaḍara*

83 *anṣār al-ḥaqā'iq* – lit., 'the supporters/followers of the facts'.

84 *'alā khuṣūm 'him al-aqwiya'*

85 ? – *sha'b muḥāfiẓ akhlāqī*. The translation of *akhlāqī*, a nisba formation from *akhlāq*, pl. of *khulq*, is doubtful.

86 'Habits and customs' renders the same word as above, *akhlāq*.

87 *nahḍa kabīra*

88 *al-muyūl wa-l-afkār*

followers of the new. Like us, they are convinced that our current literature is weak and stagnating, and they are very much looking forward to seeing [the emergence of] a new literature that will be a **[real] contemporary⁸⁹ of Western literature – science-based, [psycho-] analytical**, and with high **aesthetic ambition**.⁹⁰ This is something that cools our hearts a bit and fills our souls with great hope that our modern Egyptian stories and novels⁹¹ will be successful. For what we aim at with them is the creation of an **Egyptian** literature that carries the traits our **Egyptian [national] character⁹²** and will be representative of our **social, emotional and national life**.⁹³

In his book *Introduction to the Rhetoric of the Arabs*,⁹⁴ Dr Aḥmad Ḍayf,⁹⁵ Professor of Arabic Literature at the Egyptian University,⁹⁶ was shown to be a supporter of our theory when he talked about the necessity of creating an Arabic literature coloured in **[specifically] Egyptian colours**.⁹⁷ There is no doubt that this book will create a new era for modern Egyptian literature and that it will sketch a new path for creative writers⁹⁸ to follow.

We thank the Professor for coming out with this book, and we hope he's not sparse and will commit to print [also] his valuable lectures. Our request is likewise directed at all other professors at the Egyptian University, especially Professor Ḥusayn Efendi Ramzī,⁹⁹ his lectures on psychology could have a [similar deep] impact on modern literature.

⁸⁹ *tuḍārī*ʿ

⁹⁰ *bi-l-ṣifa al-ʿilmiyya wa-l-ṭarīqa al-taḥlīliyya wa-l-marāmī al-fanniyya*. In the last adjective, the original meaning of *fann* as 'technique' is still very prominent. ʿUbayd is convinced that mastering storytelling *technique* has to play a key role when modern Egyptian fiction should succeed as an *art*.

⁹¹ *qiṣaṣī-nā wa-riwāyātī-nā al-ʿaṣriyya al-miṣriyya* – for *riwāya*, cf. above, note 13 (with further cross-references).

⁹² *ṭabāʿī*ʿ *shakhṣiyyatī-nā al-miṣriyya*

⁹³ *yumaththil*ʿ *ḥayāt-nā al-ijtimāʿiyya wa-l-nafsiyya wa-l-waṭaniyya*

⁹⁴ The title is given as *Muqaddima fī balāghat al-ʿarab* here. The correct form, however, was *Muqaddima li-[dirāsāt] balāghat al-ʿarab* (published Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Sufūr, 1921).

⁹⁵ Egyptian literary critic, 1880–1945. “Ḍayf was one of the first theorists of the so-called *adab qawmī*, which aimed to create a new literature marked by realism, local colour and a Western style” – E.C.M. de Moor, in *EAL*, I: 185.

⁹⁶ *al-Jāmiʿa al-Miṣriyya*, the first secular university in Egypt, founded in 1908.

⁹⁷ *ādāb ʿarabiyya masbūgha bi-ṣiḥḥa miṣriyya*

⁹⁸ *al-udabāʿ* – could also be rendered, more generally, as ‘the literati’.

⁹⁹ I was unable to identify this scholar in the reference works at my disposal.

Three

The purpose of a narration¹⁰⁰ has to be a **thorough investigation into life** and **depicting** it in a **faithful** and **reliable** manner,¹⁰¹ [exactly] **as it appears to us** [i.e., as we see it]; [it also has to be] the collection of **observations** and **evidence**¹⁰² about the human being so that the story can serve as something **like a dossier**¹⁰³ in which the reader informs himself about a person's biography or a phase of the latter's life.¹⁰⁴ In it, a writer should ideally study the hidden secrets of the human **heart**; [he should also study] **social and moral development** as well as the influence of **civilisation, milieu**, and what is inherited **genetically**¹⁰⁵ in the **characters' psyche**. He should do so while at the same time holding back, to some extent, his [own] judgment or personal opinion, for his primary task should be to **dissect the human soul** and to **record** what he **discovers** via **observation**,¹⁰⁶ leaving the judgment about all that to the reader who will himself draw the conclusion from it, easily and competently¹⁰⁷ without having to bear the troubles of being called on to do so.

We are convinced that this new way of writing will initially meet strong resistance among some of our writers, those who consider themselves as leading masters whom Divine Providence endowed with **guiding the nation**¹⁰⁸ and turning it into followers of their opinions. In contrast, we oppose this idea, and we take on own responsibility for our ideas.¹⁰⁹ For a writer has absolutely no right to make such a claim – none of us is immune against making mistakes. We make up our minds according to our temperaments, preferences and personal tastes – and people's temperaments are numerous, their preferences opposed to each other, and their tastes may be different and contradictory. Therefore, we do not have the right, neither legally nor morally, to force somebody to accept what he cannot

100 *riwāya* 'telling a story' almost has the meaning of 'reporting' here; cf. also above, note 13 (with further cross-references).

101 *bi-amāna wa-ikhhlās*

102 *mustanadāt*: 'documents to rely on'

103 'Ubayd uses the foreign word here: *dūsih*.

104 *tārīkh ḥayāt insān aw ṣafḥa min ḥayāt-hī*

105 '*awāmil al-ḥaḍāra wa-l-bī'a wa-l-wirātha* – three key terms that show that the author is well-read in European positivist theories about the influence of civilisation, (social) milieu and genetic factors on human behaviour.

106 The key words here are *tashrīḥ* 'dissection', *tasjīl* 'recording, registering', and *mulāḥaẓa* 'observation'.

107 *bi-khiffa wa-mahāra*

108 *hidāyat al-umma*

109 ? – *nataḥammal^u tabi'at āra'i-nā*. – Unfortunately, the meaning does not become much clearer if we read *taba'at...* instead of *tabi'at...*

easily swallow and digest. Moreover, these very same tastes and preferences on which we base our judgments – they change from day to day. Today we may appreciate a point of view, love it and defend it, while tomorrow we may realize that we’ve made a mistake and our appreciation was too hurried; so we reject it and fight against it. How then can an author prove that his ideas are beneficial to **society**,¹¹⁰ not doing harm to it? Those “giant men” who wanted to lay down for humanity rules and laws that would lead them into eternal happiness have actually failed; they did more harm to human society than making it happier.

Nevertheless, we do not say that an author should have no right to pass a judgment or express his views. What we mean is rather that his judgment and view should become clear from his **observations** and **analyses**, not, as in the old days, via calling upon them, saying “Oh people, be reasonable! Oh people, rid yourselves of the bad habits! Oh people, stick to virtue!” – the old barren homily that leaves not the least imprint on the reader’s mind. On the contrary, the effect is often the opposite of what was the writer’s intention. The reader will namely be taken by boredom and dissatisfaction, and he will be annoyed by [all] these virtues to which he is being pushed violently and crudely.

Storytelling has neither a particular style nor general principles, it may include all styles and principles as long as it is based on **observation** and psychological **analysis**. Sometimes [the narrative] can be cast in the form of a letter, as in my story *Miss Iḥsān*, which opens the present collection. [It may also take the form] of memoirs, a confession, a short story, or a dialogue, as long as its [main] pillar is observation, **observation of real life, without reduction or exaggeration**. The author of a modern narrative does not [need to] attach the least importance to narrative flow¹¹¹ because this is secondary to the story’s essential objective – isn’t this the study of his characters, the dissection of their innermost feelings and the **analysis** of their thoughts? Therefore, it is imperative that he observes them closely and gains insight into their life crises. For one of the reasons that make authors turn to [irrealistic] imagination and mannerism is [often] his lack of a profound/comprehensive knowledge of the character of his protagonists and the fact that he creates in his narrative characters he has never, or only randomly, been able to watch and study carefully.

110 *al-hay’a al-ijtimā’iyya* – the Nahḍa’s standard term for the concept of ‘society’. It reflects the *efendiyya*’s look at society as a body, a structure, a kind of mechanism or organism that, if necessary, can be approached – and treated – as such, i.e., from the perspective of the “social engineers”, the “doctors” who, after the dissection (*tashrīḥ*) of this body (see above, note 106), will have found the defect and be able to remedy it.

111 *al-siyāq al-riwā’ī*

Our intention with all this is [to make] Egyptian writers produce mature, valuable works that will remain new and lively in spite of years and generations passing by. For a narrative will not be immortal unless it is composed of **eternal human constituents**.¹¹²

This is what we, the authors of the new emerging generation, are aspiring to. We want our works to be **mature** and **valuable** so that they do not die when we die. For we are not writing for the few hundreds of our readers, among whom perhaps only a handful who understand our ambitions and appreciate our efforts. And we do not adventure into the art of literature¹¹³ – which currently is an art that earns its masters nothing but poverty and misery¹¹⁴ – unless driven by that hope, the hope that all this will make our names respected among our children and grandchildren who will read us and understand to what extent we have sacrificed our blood and heart for their benefit.¹¹⁵

Four

The **intellectual revolution**¹¹⁶ that is flowing so powerfully¹¹⁷ through our veins¹¹⁸ prompts us to fight against everything old and makes us look forward in joyful anticipation to an **overall renaissance** to happen in Egypt.¹¹⁹ For such a renaissance tends to follow revolutions and is usually a natural result of them. This renaissance will encompass everything in our political, social and literary life.¹²⁰ Having seen veiled, segregated Egyptian women leave home [to go] to work and participate in demonstrations, alongside with Egyptian men, demanding boldly and with determination their country's rights – which they would not have been able to do before the revolution shook our country to its core¹²¹ – , we have [also] seen the writers of

112 *illā idhā kuwwinat min al-‘anāṣir al-insāniyya al-khālida*

113 *fann al-adab*

114 *al-fāqa wa-l-shaqā’*

115 *sa-yaqra’ūnā-nā wa-yudrikūnā miqdārā mā ḍaḥḥaynā-hu li-ajli-him min dimā’i-nā wa-nu-fūsinā*

116 *al-thawra al-fikriyya*

117 Lit., ‘with an immense power’ (*bi-quwwa ḥā’ila*)

118 *fī dimā’i-nā* – lit., ‘in our blood’

119 *taj’al-nā nastabshir bi-hudūth naḥḍa ‘amma fī Miṣr*

120 Lit., ‘situation(s), condition(s)’ (*aḥwāl*)

121 Lit., ‘shook our nervous system’ (*tahījā... jihāz-nā l-‘aṣabī*)

the new upcoming generation rise to criticize what we used to hold sacred and attack in an extremely brave manner the big heads who represent the literature of yesterday and today.

The revolution that we expect [to happen] in contemporary Egyptian literature will aim to **do away with the static, obscure, and hackneyed old literature**.¹²² It will resemble Victor **Hugo's** revolution against canonical literature,¹²³ as well as the one **Zola** and his group called for against Romanticism¹²⁴ in order to make room for **Realism**,¹²⁵ the basis for tomorrow's literature.

If we take an innocent, disinterested look at the literature of our present days, as an investigator who analyses causes and effects would do, it will become evident that the revolution has actually already infected dramatic arts. For that obscene, sick and licentious type [of plays that we see today on our stages] is actually nothing but a demonstration or a semi-revolution against the old and trite, [as well as?] against the western forms that the Egyptian public [now] rejects¹²⁶ and wants to be spared. This type [of plays] has led the ensemble directors to change their theatre practices:¹²⁷ They stage contemporary *Egyptian* plots now more often because it has become clear to them that our stages have to express our [national] character¹²⁸ because national scenes and **genuine Egyptian colours** tend to stimulate the sense of pleasure and liking.¹²⁹ Maybe the obscene and miserable type [of plays] owes its success just to the Egyptian touch that becomes manifest in it, as evidenced by the lack of success of the production of this kind when it features no genuine national scenes.

Above, we said that this kind [of theatre] has led the theatre directors to change their usual programs. [But not all of them did so.] Those, however, who refused to replace the [foreign] pieces¹³⁰ with Egyptian ones and insisted, in stupid and naive stubbornness, [to continue] to stage foreign pieces, far removed from **our taste**, opposed to **our mentality**,¹³¹ were either forced to emigrate from

122 *al-adab al-qadīm al-jāmid al-mutashābih al-mubtadhal*

123 *al-adab al-madrasī*

124 *al-madhab al-khayālī*, lit., 'the School of Fantasy/Imagination'

125 *madhab al-ḥaqāʾiq* (see above, notes 79 and 80).

126 Lit., 'disgorges, spits out'

127 *taghyīr manḥajⁱ-him al-tamthīl*

128 Lit., 'the necessity of imprinting the stamp of our personality on our stage' (*wujūb wasm marsaḥⁱ-nā bi-ṭābiⁱ shakhṣīyatⁱ-nā*)

129 *li-anna l-manāẓir al-qawmiyya wa-l-alwān al-miṣriyya al-ṣamīma tuthīr^u ʿādat^{an} ḥāssat al-ladhdha wa-l-iʿjāb*

130 *riwāyāt* – see above, note 13 (with further cross-references).

131 *mazāj*

Egypt, against their will, or to leave the stage, as happened with two big pillars of the theatre scene and geniuses of art. If these two should decide, some day in the future, to return to theatre-making in Egypt, they will be able to do so only on the condition that they stage contemporary Egyptian plots. So, will they possibly acknowledge this truth that we have worked so hard to make them understand?

It makes us sad to say that contemporary Egyptian literature is neither independent nor bears the traits of our [national] character these days. Rather, it is still subordinate to the static and uniform ancient Arabic literature¹³² or under the influence of foreign literature, which we have been forced to study in order to learn from it the secrets of **genuine advanced art / sound sophisticated technique**¹³³ and to adopt its pillars, rules and style.¹³⁴ Egyptian-authored pieces¹³⁵ are namely – what a pity!¹³⁶ – [often/generally] Arabized versions of foreign drama, and our fiction¹³⁷ is taken from foreign fiction! If an author sets out to compose a piece, he will either take inspiration for it from a foreign one or [downright] Egyptianize it.¹³⁸ The reason that the character traits are so evidently **inorganic** is the fact that such characters usually do not exist in our society and that their **Western features** clearly leave such an imprint on an author's [*lit. his*] piece¹³⁹ that it will lack the **natural touch**¹⁴⁰ that is one of the secrets of real art. Often even the plot itself¹⁴¹ is so foreign to our character¹⁴² that it would probably never occur on the stage of [real] Egyptian life – a result of the author's imitation of foreign productions.¹⁴³ Therefore, it is our duty as writers to give our contemporary Egyptian literature **lively** and **colourful** features, peculiar to it and by which it is identifiable as **unique**.¹⁴⁴ We must strive to free our minds from the influence of Western

132 *al-adab al-ʿarabī al-jāmid al-mubtadhal al-qadīm*

133 *al-fann al-ṣaḥīḥ al-rāqī*

134 *an naʿkhuḍḥ^a ʿan-hu qawāʿid^a-hū wa-qawānīn^a-hū wa-uslūb^a-hū*

135 ? – *al-riwāyāt al-miṣriyya al-muʿallafa*. The meaning of the attributive *muʿallafa* is not really clear to me here. Should we render it as 'fictional'? – For *riwāya*, see above, n. 13 (with further cross-references).

136 *wa-yā lil-asaf*

137 *qīṣaṣ^u-nā*

138 *immā an yaqtabis^a-hā...aw yumaṣṣir^a-hā*

139 *wa-yatajallā fī ḥādhihi l-ḥāla idtirāb shakhṣiyyat al-ashkhāṣ alladhīna lā yakūnu la-hum ghālib^m wujūd^u fī hayʾatⁱ-nā l-ijtimāʿiyya wa-tanʿakis^u l-alwān al-gharbiyya bi-jalāʾ ʿalā riwāyatⁱ-hī*

140 *al-maṣḥa al-ṭabīʿiyya*

141 *al-ḥāditha nafs^u-hā*

142 *akhlāq*

143 *tarassum al-kātib al-riwāyāt al-ajnabiyya*

144 *ṣifa ḥayya mulawwana khāṣṣa bi-hī wa-yuʿraf^u bi-hā*

literature by avoiding taking foreign narrative[traditions] as the pillars on which to erect our own. These must [instead] be built on faithful **observation**, extracted from our **daily lives**, as well as on **social** and **psychological analyses**. If we achieve this, we will have added something new, something writers from the West are incapable of doing because of their inability to study our psychology and the way we organize our lives.¹⁴⁵ There will then come the day when they will begin to translate *our* stories and plays into *their* languages, as they have an ardent desire for everything Egyptian, especially after Egypt has attracted the world’s attention through our outstanding authentic national movement.¹⁴⁶ Then, and only then, will it be possible to count the Egyptian nation among the [world’s] **independent advanced nations**,¹⁴⁷ no matter what political system it will have; for literature/culture is the criterion for a nation’s **progressiveness**.¹⁴⁸ A nation that has achieved such a degree of progress and early, promising maturation¹⁴⁹ as the Egyptian nation has achieved, is indeed worthy of an independent, artistically advanced literature/culture bearing its [sc., this nation’s] own distinctive features.¹⁵⁰

This is the **sacred obligation** that we take as our **public duty**,¹⁵¹ and we hope that some of the things that this obligation requires will be implemented. We believe that nobody can accuse us of taking the inspiration for *our* pieces/accounts – whether they are stories or plays¹⁵² – from foreign ones, or allege that a Western account has provided us with the model for some scenes or helped us shape our characters, or that the characters do not have real counterparts (*lit.*, have no existence) in the Egyptian nation/people.¹⁵³ My intuitive inclination to analyse drives me to immerse myself in the study of the innermost depths of our psychology to describe it as it is, reliably and faithfully, and not the way it should be. For this reason alone, some theater directors have refrained from taking pieces of mine to stage; they found them too real, distressing and cruel – it’s bad manners/not right,¹⁵⁴ as they say, to bring all truths to light.

145 *nafsiyyat^l-nā wa-nizām ḥayāt^l-nā*

146 *bi-ḥarakat^l-nā l-waṭaniyya al-badīʿa al-jayyida*

147 *al-umam al-mustaqilla al-rāqiya*

148 *al-ādāb miʿyār raqy al-umma*

149 *al-raqy wa-l-nuḍūj al-mubakkir al-badrī*

150 *ādāb rāqiya fanniyya mustaqilla khāṣṣa bi-hā*

151 Or: ‘that we try to fulfil’ ? (*natarassam^u-hū*)

152 *riwāyāt^l-nā, qaṣaṣiyya^{tan} kānat aw marsaḥiyya^{tan}* – cf. above, note 13 (with further cross-references).

153 *lā wujūd^a la-hum fi l-umma al-miṣriyya*

154 *lā yaṣaḥḥ^u*

We will not dare to study this delicate topic in further detail now to find out whether they are right or wrong, as we will dedicate an extensive chapter to its study in our book *Observations and Perspectives on Art / Aesthetic Contemplations*.¹⁵⁵ What we would like to do here, however, is to express our point of view, without imposing it [on the reader].¹⁵⁶ For we believe that the artist's¹⁵⁷ **duty** lies in [**technically advanced, faithful**] **description** wherever he happens to be. Art, that is to say, must be independent and released from any bonds. Art, as we've said in another context above, does not only lie in the description of beauty and perfection, it may also be a **description** of the **faults** of nature and the **short-comings** of human society. For art, as we understand it, is the ability to arouse [in us] a strong and noble feeling that we enjoy feeling creep into us, producing in our hearts a drunk, capturing **pleasure**. It takes control over us and **refines our morals / makes us civilized**. Nothing can evoke this feeling but Truth because it touches the sensitive fibers in the depths of our **hearts**. Accordingly, every truth is worth being displayed, described and spoken out.

155 *Mulāḥazāt wa-naẓarāt fanniyya* – the book announced by the author here (and which is perhaps the same as he pointed to already earlier in this Preface, cf. n. 40 above) does not seem to have seen the light of the day, as 'Ubayd died only the year after the publication of this foreword. Sabry Hafez, however, would not exclude that it existed and actually *was* published; cf. what he says about this and other (perhaps lost) publications: "At the end of his two collections, 'Īsā 'Ubayd advertised his forthcoming publications including two novels, *Bayn al-Ḥubb wa-l-Fann* (Between Love and Art) and *Yaqẓat Miṣr* (Egypt's Awakening); a collection of short stories, *al-'Usrah* (The Family); another collection in French, *Sur les bords du Nil*; a collection of critical essays, *Naẓarāt wa-mulāḥazāt fanniyyah* (Artistic Reflections); and several plays. It was customary at this time for writers to fill the final page of their books with what seems more like a declaration of their literary intentions than an authentic list of completed works awaiting publication. But in 'Īsā's case, one is inclined to take his list seriously, not only because his advertisements were very detailed and because he succeeded in publishing in 1922 the first book on the list which appeared in the final page of his first collection, but also because Muḥammad Bāqir 'Ulwān of Harvard University discovered in Cairo in 1973 the manuscripts of two of his lost plays" – Hafez 1993, 292, n. 72. – The adj. *fanniyya*, m. *fannī*, is a nisba formation from *fann* which for 'Ubayd mainly means art as 'technique', *technē*. *Naẓarāt* 'views, opinions' is rendered as 'perspectives/contemplations' here – 'perspectives' seems to be more idiomatic, while 'contemplations' would be inspired by the title *Naẓarāt*, a collection of essays and stories by M. L. al-Manfalūṭī (see above, note 59), often translated as 'Contemplations'.

156 *dūn^a ta'zīz*

157 *al-fannī*

Five

We would have liked to dedicate a chapter like this to the study of the language of affects and emotions¹⁵⁸ that the writers of the emerging new generation have begun to employ in their writings, that **vivid flexible** language that is eager to make **sophisticated** use of the vocabulary (?)¹⁵⁹ and invent new expressions that render the intended meaning **powerfully** and **exactly/precisely**. And [I would also have liked to dedicate] another [chapter] to the interpretation of the meaning of art and the definition of its literary, moral and social mission¹⁶⁰ as well as to the explanation of its rules; and yet another on the nature of philology (?)¹⁶¹ and the future of th(os)e genres that have begun to invade the language. But, well, we feel this preface has already become too long and almost boring. We will therefore postpone the final parts of this study to our book *Perspectives and Observations on Art / Aesthetic Contemplations*, which we are about to publish.

We are following the example of **Balzac**, the master of French story-writers, in his writings, which are characterized by their **humanism**¹⁶² and all stage *la comédie humaine*.¹⁶³ That means that in the following stories,¹⁶⁴ we may trace the life of the characters whose lives we had described in some snapshots in these stories,¹⁶⁵ or we present some other page of their lives, as we noticed that this method can help us greatly in describing our [national] social life.¹⁶⁶ Given that the only way for a writer to [really] **study the human psyche** is in *novels*,¹⁶⁷ we will [try to] produce self-contained Egyptian (or: entirely Egyptian?) accounts¹⁶⁸

158 *lughat al-ta’aththur wa-l-infi’āl*

159 I am not sure whether this is what the author meant. Literally, he says: ‘the choice of artistic words’ (*ikhtiyār al-kalimāt al-fanniyya*).

160 *ta’rif waẓīfat-hī al-adabiyya wa-l-akhlāqiyya wa-l-ijtimā’iyya*

161 I am not sure about the translation here – what is *ṣifat adab al-lughā* ?

162 *al-mawsūma bi-l-insāniyya*

163 ʿUbayd gives the French expression here.

164 I.e., in the short stories included in the collection *Iḥsān Hānim* to which he is writing this preface.

165 *alladhīna ṣawwarnā ṣafḥa^{tan} min ḥayāt-him fī hādhihi l-qīṣaṣ* – the wording seems to be somehow repetitive here. Not being sure whether I got the author right, I leave that as is and try to render it as literally as possible.

166 I have no idea what exactly ʿUbayd intended to say here. For me, it sounds like a redundant “either we portray one aspect of the life of these people, or we describe another one” – which would be rather banal...

167 Lit., ‘long stories’ (*qīṣaṣ ṭawīla*). Italics of *novels* are mine, S.G.

168 *riwāyātⁿ miṣriyya^{tan} tāmma^{tan}* – it is not clear whether *tāmma^{tan}* should be read as an adjective-attribute or as an adverb. For *riwāya*, see above, note 13 (with further cross-references).

that portray a *general* aspect of Egyptian life,¹⁶⁹ as we [also] have indeed written an account of this type that we called *Between Love and Art*¹⁷⁰ and in which we analyzed the finest nuances¹⁷¹ of the feelings of an Egyptian writer who is eager to become famous, including a description of the Egyptian art scene/milieu.¹⁷²

We have also been eager to **portray Eastern**¹⁷³ **life as it is, without reduction or exaggeration**, resorting, in delicate sensitive situations,¹⁷⁴ to double-entendre¹⁷⁵ to express our hidden message,¹⁷⁶ sometimes also to allusions¹⁷⁷ that let the reader feel¹⁷⁸ the meaning we intended without making it explicit. That is, we obscured our message¹⁷⁹ in a way that makes it difficult for young naïve girls to grasp the real meaning. This is also the method followed by the big French writers who think that life must be described as it is, not as it should be. **Maupassant**, for instance, descended to the lowest levels of the most awful dirty quagmires and succeeded in depicting them **without betraying Truth**.

However, I have to confess that the question of the language in which the dialogues¹⁸⁰ should be written has tired my mind and caused me much pain before I eventually found a solution for it. Language, that is to say, is a tricky problem that any serious writer¹⁸¹ has to face, because there is such a big difference between the language we write in and the language we speak. If we use the former it appears mannered, inadequate, unnatural, far from the type of art that demands that the description of **local colour** be marked by **realism** and **precision**. And if we use the latter we kill the Arabic Language¹⁸² and decide to

169 *qit'a 'amma*. – Italics of *general* are mine, S.G.

170 *Bayn al-ḥubb wa-l-fann*. This novel seems to be lost – at least, it is not mentioned in any source about 'Ubayd that I was able to get hold of.

171 *juz'iyāt mashā'ir...*

172 *al-wasaṭ al-fannī al-miṣrī*

173 My italics, S.G.

174 *al-mawāqif al-ḥarija al-daḡiqa*

175 *kalimāt al-tawriya* 'words of concealment', a standard rhetorical figure in Classical Arabic, explained by W.P. Heinrichs as "a *double entendre* or pun in which the obvious meaning of a homonym is not the intended one, also called *ihām*, 'delusion'. [...]" *EAL*, II: 660.

176 *maqāṣid-nā l-khaṭfiyya*

177 *kalimāt mulhama* 'inspired words', or probably rather *mulhima* 'suggestive'

178 *tūḥī ilā l-qārī*

179 *ja'alnā 'ibaratā-nā fī ḥālā^{fin} min al-ghumūd*

180 'Ubayd gives an Arabic expression *and* the French word here: *al-muḥādathāt al-thunā'iyya* (*dialogue*).

181 *al-kātib al-fannī*

182 I am capitalizing 'Language' here in order to mark the status of the 'Arabiyya as a cultural institution.

ban the fictional and dramatic genres from our literature/culture while we [actually] want these to be the strongest and greatest pillars of Egyptian literature/culture, as is the case in the West, because the effect they have on the mind is most profound and because they help the writer study all the givens and issues, whether practical or philosophical or social or moral or psychological.

How then should we **reconcile the language** people speak in daily life with the high literary language that is to be used in written works? To underline the importance of this problem, let us remind you here of the fact that our late friend, the revolutionary artist **Muḥammad Bey Taymūr**,¹⁸³ had decided, after careful consideration, that theatrical plays¹⁸⁴ should be composed in the **vernacular/the language of the masses**,¹⁸⁵ in order to imprint our literature with the [typically] Egyptian character and to make the stories closer to art and Reality/Truth, **devoid of mannerism and stiffness**.¹⁸⁶

Yet, despite the strong admiration we have for the dear friend we have lost,¹⁸⁷ we cannot agree with this radical and hazardous idea. For we are of those who are strong partisans¹⁸⁸ of the [classical] Arabic language. We do not want Egyptian literature to become independent from Arabic literature. The former should just have a character of its own that distinguishes it from the latter and gives it the freedom to develop and progress.

We are of the opinion that in order to **reconcile**¹⁸⁹ **art and language**, the dialogues should be written in an **intermediate Arabic**¹⁹⁰ that is free from complex linguistic structures¹⁹¹ and into which occasionally even some dialect words may be blended so that it does not give the feeling of stiffness and artificiality and we can give it the [typically] **Egyptian touch** and paint it with **local colours**. A dialect word may produce a meaning that a sentence written in classical Arabic in its entirety cannot express.

183 Egyptian dramatist and prose writer, 1892–1921. “His reading of realistic writers like De Maupassant and Zola prepared him to become a pioneer of the modern Arabic short story [...]. [... Around 1918, he was among the co-founders of] the literary circle Madrasat al-ādāb al-jadida, later known as al-Madrasa al-ḥadītha (the ‘Modern School’) [...]” – De Moor 1998c, 762.

184 *al-riwāyāt al-qīṣaṣiyya al-marsaḥiyya* – I do not know what (if anything at all) the double qualification of these *riwāyāt* as *qīṣaṣiyya* and *marsaḥiyya* possibly can mean.

185 *al-luḡha al-ʿāmmiyya*

186 *khālīya min al-takalluf wa-l-jumūd*

187 Muḥammad Taymūr had died shortly before ʿUbayd wrote his Preface, cf. n. 183.

188 *yataʿaṣṣabūna*

189 *ḥattā nuwaffiq^a*

190 *luḡha ʿarabiyya mutawassiṭa*

191 *khālīya min al-tarākīb al-luḡhawīyya*

If the dialogues are short and condensed¹⁹² then the best thing we can do is to render them as they are, just as they come out of [the mouth of] characters of different **confessions and races**¹⁹³ with their vernacular expressions and foreign gibberish.¹⁹⁴ We do not think that anyone will stand up and disagree with us on that, as even the French writers themselves – who adore their language and are more eager to preserve it than we are to preserve ours – often insert into their valuable writings some foreign constructions, German or English words, as well as words used by the French masses themselves, exactly as they speak their language – and we have never ever seen any of them stand up and claim that this strategy was a failure or an insult to their language.

Our only aim with writing modern Egyptian stories and plays [or: novels?]¹⁹⁵ is to contribute to the creation of a modern Egyptian **literature of our own**,¹⁹⁶ bearing the **stamp of our [national] character and specific identity**¹⁹⁷ and corresponding to the high level of **progress** and early **maturity** that we have reached.¹⁹⁸

So, have we reached this aim to which we have been aspiring? This is what the Egyptian [reading] public will have to decide – hopefully, their verdict will be unprejudiced/unbiased¹⁹⁹ and encouraging.

December 1921 ‘Īsà ‘Ubayd

192 Or: ‘improvised’? (*muqtaḍaba*)

193 *min al-ashkhāṣ al-mukhtalifī l-niḥal wa-l-ajnās*

194 *bi-alfāẓ^l-him al-‘āmmiyya wa-raṭānat^l-him al-a‘jamiyya*

195 *al-qīṣaṣ wa-l-rīwāyāt al-‘aṣriyya al-miṣriyya* – cf. above, note 13 (with further cross-references).

196 *khāṣṣ bi-nā*

197 *mawsūm bi-ṭābi‘ shakhṣiyyat^l-nā wa-akhlāq^l-nā*

198 *yattaḥiq^u ma‘a mā balaghñā-hu min al-raḡy wa-l-nuḍūj al-mubakkir al-badrī*

199 *munazzah^{an}*

13 Maḥmūd Taymūr (1894–1973)

First published in *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography*, iii: 1850–1950, ed. R. Allen (Wiesbaden 2010), 350–366

This chapter: Originally written for, and published in, a volume of “literary biographies” (Roger Allen, ed. 2010), this chapter focuses on the literary and personal formation of Maḥmūd Taymūr, one of the most prominent representatives of early twentieth-century Arabic literature. It follows his work chronologically, examining how his writing evolved in parallel with changes in his environment and life. As such, it covers a whole life span and the complete literary output of the writer who is commonly regarded as one of the pioneers of “national literature” in the Arab world. Such a literary biography can serve as a fine example of how an emerged Nahḍawī subjectivity unfolded in the context of nation-building after World War I and the collapse of the old world order, and along which lines it developed during four, five decades to eventually surpass what is typically called ‘Nahḍawī’. If it is true that Maḥmūd Taymūr’s literary journey encompassed several stages – starting as a ‘sentimental’ writer and progressing through an analytical-descriptive phase, advocacy of ‘national’ local colour, then a broader humanistic approach, and finally a call for ‘committed literature’ (see below) – then we can observe how all these stages are rooted in the Nahḍa, but also how they in the end lead beyond the Nahḍa ‘proper’. After World War II, the Nahḍawī subject generally ceases to be a subject that makes all kinds of efforts to assert itself; rather, the process of “rising” (*nuḥūd*), the “upswing” (*nahḍa*), seems to be completed, and all further developments are made from the position of a personality that regards itself as mature and established.

Furthermore, Maḥmūd Taymūr’s literary biography nicely complements the preceding chapter as it illustrates how a member of the “Modern School” (*al-Madrasa al-Ḥadītha*) sought to ‘translate’ theoretical thinking about an ideal “national literature” into literary practice. It highlights how emerging *national* subjectivity adopted techniques of self-assertion developed during the earlier decades of the Nahḍa, such as being a critical observer, social reformer, psychological analyst, moralist, feeling subject, and innovative creator.

These aspects are still prominent in Maḥmūd Taymūr’s early writings as well as in the two programmatic forewords by which he, too, like ‘Isā ‘Ubayd (see above, Chapter 12), introduced two collections of short stories (*al-Shaykh Jum’a*, 1925, and *al-Shaykh Sayyid al-‘abīṭ*, 1926). The heritage of nineteenth century Nahḍa is likewise present in what we know about the intellectual climate in

which Maḥmūd Taymūr grew up, with the classical Arabic philological tradition represented in his father (and the latter's enormous library) and all the other influences that contributed to the formation of the young writer, like his readings of contemporary Arab sentimentalists (Jubrān, al-Manfalūṭī, etc.) as well as European authors, especially Guy de Maupassant and Anton Chekhov.

* * *

13.1 Maḥmūd Taymūr's Life and Work – An attempt at a literary biography

Maḥmūd Taymūr is a key figure for modern Egyptian, and Arabic, literature. As a most prolific writer who with hundreds of short stories and a number of programmatic studies contributed substantially to the breakthrough, and lasting establishment, of a new prose genre as a recognised form of literary expression, he is usually referred to as the “father”, or “shaykh” (grand old man, chief, master), of the modern Arabic short story. The remaining part of his *œuvre*, hardly less voluminous than his output in the field of the short story, and in many cases of an acknowledged high quality, has received comparatively little attention: almost ten novels, some twenty plays, a number of studies on Arabic language and literature (some of them pioneering), a handful of travel accounts as well as numerous essays, collections of “reflections, ideas, inspirations” (*khawāṭir*) and memoir-like reminiscences.

13.1.1 Family background, childhood in Darb Sa'āda and 'Ayn Shams

Maḥmūd Taymūr was born in Cairo in the Darb Sa'āda quarter where his great-grandfather had built a large domicile in 1816 after having settled in Egypt. The Taymūrs were of mixed Arab-Kurdish origin and had lived in the region of Mosul before Maḥmūd's ancestor came to the Nile as an officer in the army of the Ottoman provincial governor and “opened” the country for the family (this is why he was called “the Pioneer”). In time he even rose to the position of the Governor's right hand, a position that allowed him to acquire the wealth, real estate, ‘aristocracy,’ and also educational facilities which later generations could profit from. The palais in Darb Sa'āda was to house three generations of major officials and highly cultivated men of letters. “The Pioneer's” son, Maḥmūd's grandfather Ismā'il (1815–1872), served as educator of the princes at the court of the ‘vice-king’ (khedive) of Egypt. Maḥmūd's aunt 'Ā'isha (1840–1902), Ismā'il's daughter,

was instructed in religious matters, grammar and literature by renowned teachers, mastered not only Arabic, but also Persian and Ottoman, started to write poems and prose fiction after her husband's early death, and thus became 'Ā'isha al-Taymūriyya, the famous pioneer of women's writing in modern Arabic literature. Her (half-) brother, Ismā'īl's son from another woman, that is, Maḥmūd's father Aḥmad (1871–1930), received his education, among many others, from his sister 'Ā'isha and became one of the finest Arabic philologists of his time who penned numerous studies on Arabic language and Arab life and culture (folklore) and enjoyed an international reputation. If 'Ā'isha, thirty years his senior, can still be seen as a representative of the Ottoman era and its 'pure' esthetics, Aḥmad Taymūr's interests and efforts focussed on Arabic and Arab culture not without a certain utilitarianism – like many of his contemporaries he hoped to be able to revive the spirit of the Arabs' 'golden ages' and in this way initiate an Arab(ic) *nahḍa*, a “renaissance”, at a time when the Middle East had already begun to become dominated by European powers politically and economically (England had occupied Egypt in 1882 and established a colonial regime and economic system); the intellectuals had to find answers to the challenges of technical modernisation and the Middle Easterners' seemingly evident civilisational backwardness, from which also began to result a feeling of inferiority. Classicism seemed to be an answer and was widespread throughout the Arab world. Yet another age, that of the quest for national independence and then the consciousness of being free – and at the same time responsible – , is what the next generation of Taymūrs stands for, especially Maḥmūd and his elder brother Muḥammad.

These two, and their still elder brother Ismā'īl, were the children of Aḥmad Taymūr, the classicist encyclopedian and philologist, and his wife Khadija, the daughter of Aḥmad Pasha Rashīd, then Minister of the Interior, from a Greek wife. Aḥmad Taymūr and Khadija married in 1890, Ismā'īl was born in 1891, Muḥammad in 1892, and Maḥmūd in 1894.

Darb Sa'āda, situated between al-Mūsķi and Bāb al-Khalq in Old Cairo but bordering on the 'modern' city to the West, was still a rather mixed quarter at that time. There were the little palaces of pashas and houses of begs, but also a lot of workshops, stores and shops; in an autobiographical essay published in 1960 in *al-Ādāb*, Taymūr remembers it even as an “authentically popular” quarter in which many “different groups and classes” were living side by side. Although upper class families usually were eager to keep their children away from those of the lower classes, the Taymūr boys were allowed to mix freely with the craftsmen's, shopkeepers' and domestics' children, playing soccer, having races and enjoying all other kinds of children's amusements, observing also the adults at their work, listening to old men's stories, the alley's gossip and the women's

songs. The father's tolerant attitude thus enabled Maḥmūd and his brothers to get to know, in spite of their 'aristocratic' background, those aspects of the life of the Egyptian 'common man' that would later become the focus of attention in Muḥammad's and Maḥmūd's early writings.

The first tragic blow that seems to have left a lasting imprint on Maḥmūd's personality was his mother's untimely early death. She died – from measles! – in 1899 when Maḥmūd was only five years old, and since the father did not remarry he grew up motherless. There are no autobiographical statements as to the effect of this loss, but judging from the many short stories, both by Muḥammad and Maḥmūd, which made orphans their protagonists, it can be assumed that the children suffered severely from it. The love and affection with which aunt 'Ā'isha (the poetess, then approaching her sixties already) tried to replace the mother seem to have helped them to overcome the stroke of fate, but obviously this was not enough to compensate wholly for the loss.

The place left by their mother was filled, at least partially, by their father, whose influence on Maḥmūd would perhaps not otherwise have been as deep as it came to be. Together with the old family tradition, the children's increased fixation on their father may have given the world of books and learning in which he lived an additional appeal. This was even more so when, only three years after the mother's death, their aunt 'Ā'isha also passed away (1902). At the time Maḥmūd was still attending the Nāṣiriyya Primary School where he received a standard education of the modernised, mostly secular type from a crème of teachers who had to prepare intelligent students from the high society for the secondary level of the *lycée khédivial*. In his free time, Maḥmūd continued to play with the children of the quarter and appears to have been a happy and sociable boy.

13.1.2 Early youth

Though Aḥmad Taymūr was still in his early thirties when his wife died, he seems to have suffered from a kind of rheumatism which his doctor attributed, among other things, to the unfavorable climatic conditions in the old family residence. The large house that "the Pioneer" had built more than eighty years ago was now quite rotten, and its cold and damp interior was certainly not the environment in which Aḥmad's health could improve. He therefore decided, in 1903 or 1904, to give up the Darb Sa'āda domicile – which in Maḥmūd's recollection of his early childhood resembled a "ruined fortress" – and move to 'Ayn Shams, then still at the north-eastern outskirts of Cairo, where the family possessed a fine spacious

cottage in a rural, and much drier, area, not too far from the city. The idea of a change of location may well have helped him get over the loss of his beloved wife and his elder sister.

In ‘Ayn Shams several things became important for the young Maḥmūd and impressed him so deeply that they left their marks/traces in his writings. The first was the experience of life in the countryside. While he had come to know the milieu of the urban common people in Darb Sa‘āda, here in ‘Ayn Shams he could gain a first-hand knowledge of the life of the fellaheen (Egyptian peasants). Although the enormous social distance separating these Egyptians from urban ‘aristocrats’ was never forgotten, Muḥammad and Maḥmūd were allowed to mix freely with the people of the neighborhood, playing soccer with the other boys, joining the fellahs at work on the fields, and joining their customary evening gatherings, when they sat together talking, gossiping, disputing, telling stories, and singing songs. According to the memoirs of Ignatīi Yu. Krachkovskii (1883–1951), the famous Russian Arabist, the Taymūr boys were looked at by the local population as “real fellahs”. The local colour which, a few years later, was to become a characteristic feature of the early short stories of both Muḥammad and Maḥmūd was thus chiefly nourished in its imagery, selection of characters, and ‘Egyptianness’ from impressions that the two boys obtained from encounters outside their aristocratic homes in Darb Sa‘āda and ‘Ayn Shams.

At home meanwhile, the atmosphere of traditional Taymūrian erudition and learning began to exert more and more influence on Maḥmūd as he went to school and started learning to read and write. Aḥmad Taymūr possessed an immense private library, and, according to Maḥmūd’s recollection, he gave it “all his attention” and “spared neither time nor money” on it. Having lost his wife, he never remarried; instead, as some biographers have it, he “married” his own library. Maḥmūd recalls that the library grew up with him; from which stemmed his own love for books. In time it was to become one of the finest in the Middle East (with more than 7,000 titles in 1914 and more than 18,000 at the end of Aḥmad Taymūr’s life). Because it included a large number of precious manuscripts the collection also attracted numerous visitors, among them sheikhs from al-Azhar, intellectuals, writers and scholars, not only from Egypt but also from abroad (among them the above-mentioned Krachkovskii). These people of course also sat down with Aḥmad, sought his opinion and advice, held discussions with him (and often in small circles as well) about matters of shared interest or common concern; this intellectual atmosphere inside the home was to be as important for the two boys’ development during their formative years as the milieu outside where they were consorting with the poorer people in both city and country.

Even before they were able to grasp the meaning of classical Arabic poems, their father made them learn some of the finest pieces by heart. However, this introduction to the world of the classical heritage became much more appealing to Maḥmūd when his father introduced him to the stories from “A Thousand and One Nights”, perhaps because their folkloristic simplicity made them seem closer to the kind of popular stories that Maḥmūd had heard in *Darb Sa'āda* and ‘Ayn Shams or else they simply had a greater appeal for a child of his age.

It must have been still during their time in ‘Ayn Shams that Maḥmūd's brother, Muḥammad, began to compose poetry himself. He showed such extraordinary talent that he soon became known as “the poet of the Ecole Khédivale”. In 1905, at the age of fourteen, he is also said to have published his first articles in one of the most important papers of the time. Maḥmūd admired his brother for that very much. From early age, he used to regard him not only as a playmate and intimate friend but also as an example to follow.

So it was also Muḥammad who introduced him to modern, contemporary Arabic literature after their father had started to familiarize them with the classical heritage. While Aḥmad Taymūr continued in his efforts when the boys joined the Ilhāmiyya Secondary School in order to complete their standard education on the next level, Muḥammad had begun to read the works of the *mahjar* (diaspora) authors, that is, of the Arab, mostly Syro-Lebanese, writers who had left their home countries and settled in the New World, among them, in the first place, Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān (1883–1931), Amīn al-Riḥānī (1876–1940), and Mikhā'il Nu'ayma (Naimy, 1889–1988), and of course tried to make his younger brother-friend share his ideas and feelings. Maḥmūd may still have been too young to fully understand what these writings were really about but, judging from the first poetry he composed some years later (and eventually published in 1915), it must already have fallen on a fertile ground: it was in that same free-verse form for which Jubrān had become famous, and its sentimental tone very much reflected the spirit of the diaspora authors.

The impact of his reading of *mahjar* writers is evident also from the first piece of fiction at which Maḥmūd tried his hand in 1908, at the age of fourteen. Reportedly, the experiment bore the title *al-Sharaf al-rafi'* (Noble Sense of Honour) and told the story of an Indian girl whom an English officer had assaulted and who was rightly revenged after that by her people. This plot, which of course epitomizes the colonial situation and advocates retaliation for unjust treatment at the hands of the colonial power and self-defense of the local population against foreign aggression, clearly shows that romantic nationalism was appealing very much to Maḥmūd, as it was to Arabs in general at the time, especially so in Egypt where a number of events had heightened anti-British emotions and produced a

nationalist movement that accused the colonial regime of ‘despotism’ and began to call for independence. The British had themselves added fuel to the mass feelings directed against them through unjustified executions of local peasants in the Delta village of Dinshawāy in 1906. The year 1908 in which Maḥmūd penned *al-Sharaf al-rafiʿ* saw the foundation of the Egyptian National Party as well as, for example, the opening of the Egyptian (now Cairo) University, a private initiative aimed at raising the level of local higher education to international standards. An Egyptian author who was also very much *en vogue* then, especially among young men in their late teens, was Muṣṭafā Luṭfi al-Manfalūṭī (1876–1924). Maḥmūd, though still a bit younger, was no exception, and the sadness and exaggerated melodramatic mood of *al-Sharaf al-rafiʿ* reveals the influence of his readings of al-Manfalūṭī. (The father, however, whom Maḥmūd had approached to help him publish the story, did not grant the boy this favour because he found it still not mature enough.)

One or two years earlier, the family had moved back to Cairo (‘Ayn Shams seems to have been a bit too far from the center of intellectual life) and found a new domicile there in the Ḥilmiyya al-Jadida quarter which had been built only recently and was now a favored place to live for many government officials. While the children continued to go to school, received additional instruction from their father and read al-Manfalūṭī and the *mahjar* authors, they also used to ‘stage’ some plays before an audience of family members, friends and guests (Muḥammad was to become a dramatist and an actor later in his life!), and also trained their pens further by editing a family newspaper.

In 1911 Muḥammad finished his secondary education and, like many sons of upper class families, was sent to Europe for further studies. While Muḥammad stayed in Europe (1912–1914, most of the time in Paris), Maḥmūd completed his school diploma (*baccalauréat*, 1912), registered at the Higher School for Agriculture (perhaps because he had liked the rural atmosphere of ‘Ayn Shams and at the same time sympathized with the poor fellahs), and studied there for two years.

However, the year 1914 was to be a kind of turning-point in his life. Firstly, he suffered a heavy attack of typhoid which not only forced him to abandon his studies but also changed his life completely; from then on, he was constantly under medical control, had to follow a diet and a certain daily rhythm, and was restricted in his movements. Thus, from the age of twenty till the end of his life he felt like living “in a cage” (interview, repr. in Campbell 1996). In retrospect, Taymūr even interprets his illness as possibly the main factor in his writing, in that, as a means of distracting himself from his suffering he decided to train himself to write fiction.

The second turning-point was Muḥammad's return to Egypt due to the outbreak of World War I. During the two years he had spent in France Muḥammad had not so much attended university but rather read European literature and frequented theaters. He came back full of new ideas, and it was he who recommended to Maḥmūd the writers of modern European short fiction, and particularly Guy de Maupassant (1850–1893). This latter was to become "the greatest short-story writer" in Taymūr's eyes, a model whose artistic level he constantly tried to attain by working on his style. With his own literature, he desired to achieve what de Maupassant had achieved for the French; his early short stories he even signed as *Mūbāsān al-miṣrī* (the Egyptian Maupassant). Another European author whom Muḥammad recommended enthusiastically was Anton Chekhov (1860–1904). Chekhov appealed to him as a sharp analyst of the depths of the human psyche. He too was to become one of the main models for Taymūr, but only when he made his 'psychological turn' in the late 1920s. Among local Egyptian writers, Muḥammad considered only two texts worth reading: *Ḥadīth 'Īsā b. Hishām* ('Īsā b. Hishām's Tale, first published as a series of articles starting from 1898) by Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī (1858-1930) and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's (1888–1956) *Zaynab* (heroine's name, 1913). European short story writers as well as the chief representatives of local socio-political satire and 'romantic nationalism' in literature thus widened Maḥmūd Taymūr's horizon in his early twenties, a few years before he published his own first short stories.

13.1.3 Early career

Having recovered sufficiently from the attack of typhoid, Taymūr started to work, still in 1914, in the Ministry of Justice. After a year, he transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for another six months, after which he decided that he should give up this kind of occupation altogether because it did not suit his character and talents. Since the Taymūrs were rich, there was no need to earn a living by working; thus, from 1917 onwards, he lived the life of a wealthy man of letters, dedicating himself to reading, writing and (later in his career) delivering lectures. His decision may have been enhanced also by the successful publication, in 1915, of some pieces of prose poetry (*shi'r manthūr*), still in the style of Jubrān, in the reformist, national-oriented avant-garde review, *al-Sufūr*, and in 1916 the publication of *al-Ḥubb bayn al-ya's wa-qublat al-amal* (Love between Desperation and the Kiss of Hope), a story which, like his early poetry, showed the influence of his readings of neither European literature nor of al-Muwayliḥī or Haykal, but was simply still highly sentimental.

The decision to quit his bourgeois job may also have been influenced by Muḥammad's example: after his return from Paris, the elder brother was living the life of an artist (actor and dramatist). Not only did he bring out some poetry, but also published his first seven short stories (1917, in *al-Sufūr* as well). Furthermore, judging from Muḥammad's first play which bore the title *al-'Uṣfūr fī l-qafaṣ* (The Bird in the Cage, 1918), the fact that the two younger brothers abandoned the careers that they were expected to pursue may also be interpreted as a kind of rebellion against the restrictions of the 'gilded cage' of their education (without ever blaming their father explicitly for that, of course).

13.1.4 The "Modern School", marriage, Muḥammad's death

The second half of the 1910s was of utmost importance for modern Egyptian literature because it is then that a group of writers who demanded for Egypt a modern and at the same time authentically *Egyptian* literature, constituted itself. At first it centred around *al-Sufūr*, but later they formed themselves into *al-Madrasa al-ḥaditha*, the Modern School. The main literary vehicle for the achievement of their goals was the short story, a genre previously unknown to Arabic literature, and it was largely due to their efforts that it eventually came to be established as one of the major genres of modern Arabic fiction. Muḥammad Taymūr was an active member of the group, and through him also Maḥmūd was introduced into this circle of kindred revolutionary-minded reformist spirits, just one year before the national uprising of 1919 under the charismatic leader Sa'd Zaghlūl which finally led to Egypt's (at least formal) independence in 1923.

Just one year after the 'Revolution', in 1920, Maḥmūd Taymūr married Zaynab Dhū l-Fiqār, the daughter of the King's chamberlain. He was then twenty-six and was not allowed to see his wife before the wedding; but, unlike the hero in Muḥammad's *Bird in the Cage*, Maḥmūd did not rebel against the traditional custom of arranged marriage. There was also no need – he fell in love with the bride, and Zaynab even seems to have become his life's great love. They had a boy and two daughters. However, this happy marriage at the end of 1920 was followed by a terrible stroke of fate a few weeks later. In February 1921 Muḥammad died very suddenly. His death hit Maḥmūd very hard, and he obviously reckoned the best way to cope with the loss of his beloved brother, intimate friend and admired example was to carry on and accomplish what death had prevented Muḥammad from accomplishing. First, he edited his Collected Works (*Mu'allafāt Muḥammad Taymūr*, 3 vols, 1922) and later cared for a book edition of the stories that had appeared earlier under the heading *Mā tarāhu l-'uyūn* (What the Eyes

behold, 1927), thereby honoring the brother's memory, making his art available to a greater public (and preserving it better for posterity). Secondly, he tried 'to take over' and continue Muḥammad's work. Maḥmūd's *al-Shaykh Jum'a*, the title story of the collection that came out three years later, was first published in 1922 in *al-Sufūr* where Muḥammad had played such an important role. Unlike the earlier sentimental attempts, this story was written in the spirit of Maupassant'ian realism – as his lifelong reverence for this author may perhaps also be explained, partly at least, as Brugman (1984, 255) suggests, from loyalty towards his brother, who "cultivated and refined" Maḥmūd's love for literature and to whom he therefore often referred as "my master" (*ustādhi*).

In the three years following Muḥammad's death, Maḥmūd devoted himself not only to editing the latter's œuvre but also to propagating 'modern' forms of writing, first by selecting, translating, and publishing a number of exemplary stories from world literature, then more and more by composing himself "authentically Egyptian" stories in the spirit of the Modern School and their call for an *adab qawmī*, a "national literature". After the stories had appeared in newspapers and journals, he brought out many of them again in his early collections: *al-Shaykh Jum'a* (Sheikh Jum'a [also: Gom'ah], 1925), *'Amm Mitwallī* ('Uncle' Mitwalli, 1925), and *al-Shaykh Sayyid al-'abiṭ* (Sheikh Sayyid the Fool, 1926). Since classical literature was regarded as being out-dated and the writings of the *mahjar* authors and al-Manfalūṭī (as well as the foreign, or foreign-inspired, yet extremely popular boulevard novels) were considered too melodramatic and unrealistic to be able to play a positive role in the construction of new independent Egypt, Maḥmūd Taymūr and the writers of the Modern School sought to create a literature that would both mirror reality and not remain silent about the evils and 'diseases' that stood in the way of progress. In his early stories he and his 'brothers-in-arms' saw themselves as their society's doctors and believed that literature could serve as a remedy and thus help to pave the way for a better future. The diseases which he and the other Modernists identified were, for example, alcoholism and gambling, the corruption and hypocrisy of religious leaders, arranged marriages, despotic husbands, the lack of education, and widespread superstition. But it was not only the themes that had to be 'typically Egyptian', but also the characters and the settings. This is why many of the stories were given the heroes' names as their titles, give detailed descriptions of the surroundings, of the protagonists' and other persons' outward appearances and habits, ways of living and thinking. In the early collections, Taymūr lets them even talk in the Egyptian vernacular (a *faut pas* according to traditional esthetics).

Most stories in these collections are set in the countryside and deal with characters who reportedly were modelled after persons whom Maḥmūd had met in

his childhood in ‘Ayn Shams. From the way he portrays these rural (and also urban) Egyptians in his first collections it becomes clear that as a writer he has not yet been able fully to overcome his aristocratic background. Quite often, he seems to be amused at their “exoticness” (Jad 1983, 37). Two of these early collections are also preceded by programmatic introductions. In the foreword to *al-Shaykh Jum‘a* Taymūr discusses the nature of the short story genre, its usefulness and prospects, as well as the desired ‘realism’, including the question of ‘literarising’ the vernacular. *Al-Shaykh Sayyid al-‘abīṭ* opens with a lengthy study on “The Beginnings and Development of the Arabic Story”, an important document in which the author scans the classical Arabic – elite as well as popular – literary tradition in search of what could serve as autochthonous predecessors to which the new ‘European’ genres, short story and novel, could be linked in order to root them in the Arab culture (he is however well aware that, in general, “the Arabs did not care much about prose fiction”). These forewords can be considered landmarks in modern Arabic literary theory and literary history.

13.1.5 The ‘analytical psychological turn’

From the mid-1920s, Taymūr published a new collection of stories almost every one or two years. In many of them he also re-published texts that had appeared already in earlier collections but which he thought could still be improved. In many cases, the revised texts differ considerably from their predecessors and show his striving for perfection as well as the development of his art.

The constant flow of texts did not stop even when in 1925 he left Egypt for a two-years stay in Europe (mainly in Switzerland). With the principal aim of stabilizing his health, he spent most of his time there reading European fiction, obviously reckoning his previous readings in this field to be still insufficient. The reading absorbed him almost totally and, together with the direct exposure to European civilisation, impressed him deeply. In an autobiographical document, *al-Maṣādir allatī alhamatnī l-kitāba* (The Sources which inspired my writing; published as preface to *Fir‘awn al-ṣaghīr*, 1939), he recalls that what he read and saw often “shocked” him and used to “linger in my heart of hearts.” It is no wonder then that he felt the stay in Switzerland had made him more mature, nor is it surprising that the new insights and experiences stood at the beginning of what would soon lead to a new stage in his writing. In his recollection it was here that he realised that local colour was not everything, that literature should deal,

though perhaps still in a local garment, with matters of a more general significance and that he should therefore focus more on *al-nafs al-bashariyya*, “the human soul”, in general.

It took some time however to translate these insights into a new type of narrative. Literary historians differ as to whether Taymūr's ‘analytical psychological turn’ took place already in the late 1920s or not before the mid-1930s. Wielandt notes that already in *Rajab Afandī* (Rajab Efendi, 1928) the author's sophisticated analysis of the protagonist's character goes far beyond the patterns and categories of characterisation he had applied rather mechanically in earlier texts. Brugman, on the other hand, is convinced that the first example in which the author got past his former exotist, “tourist-like” attitude towards his heroes – preferably “folksy people” and “strange characters” with “distorted appearances” in “dilapidated surroundings”, as Jad describes them (Jad 1983, 37) –, is the novella *al-Aṭlāl* (The Ruins, 1934). Be that as it may, both *Rajab Afandī* and *al-Aṭlāl* give evidence of the fact that the writer was entering a new phase in which the ‘inner worlds’ of his characters received increased attention, but not without relating them to the conditions of upbringing and *milieu* as well as connecting them organically with the behavior of the environment with which they interacted. That is, whereas the earlier stories were either rather static studies of a character or a milieu (tableaux of manners), or effectively focussed on a curious event, or aimed at discussing a certain social problem (Wielandt's four “types of narrative”), the texts now became more and more complex and accordingly also longer. *Rajab Afandī*, though still a linear one-string narrative no different in principle from earlier stories, consists of more than a hundred pages in the book edition, *al-Aṭlāl* ninety. With *al-Aṭlāl* Taymūr also performed, consciously, a ‘novelist turn’: he subtitled the text a *riwāya qaṣaṣiyya miṣriyya*, “an Egyptian novel”.

Maḥmūd Taymūr's increased interest in psychology parallels the same tendency in the Modern School during the second half of the 1920s. Yaḥyà Ḥaqqī, himself a member of the group and also its chronicler, recalls in his *Fajr al-qīṣṣa al-miṣriyya* (The Dawn of Egyptian Fiction, c. 1959/60) that the change in their understanding of what ‘realism’ in literature could mean was brought about essentially by their reading of Russian literature; whereas the French authors had appealed to their intellect, they found the Russians much closer to their hearts. Though Taymūr was staying in Europe when the Modern School started to run their review, *al-Fajr* (The Dawn), in 1925, he does not seem to have been cut off from the discussions going on in his home country; it is also known that he read Tolstoy in 1926. As is indicated not only by the founding of their new literary review (only two years after the granting to Egypt of a limited degree of independence) but also in the subtitle of *al-Fajr*, *ṣaḥīfat al-hadm wa-l-binā*’ (“The Paper of

Demolition and Reconstruction”), this group of writers believed that it was now definitely time to lay new and sound foundations for Egypt’s future national culture. In addition to authenticity (through local colour) and technical maturation, the turn to human universals qua psycholocial analysis was believed to guarantee a breakthrough to global standards of modernity.

However, in the year that Taymūr returned from Switzerland, *al-Fajr* was discontinued, and the group soon separated. The revolutionary vigor had soon cooled down and began to give way to a sometimes rather desperate mood. As *Rajab Afandī* as well as *al-Maḥkūm ‘alayhi bi-l-i’-dām* (Death Sentence), the story included in the same collection (1928), show, Taymūr reacted to this situation with stories “dedicated totally to the dark sides of human existence” (Brockelmann 1942, 221). At the same time, *Rajab Afandī* is the first in which he gives up the use of the vernacular for the dialogues – his tribute to the hope of winning recognition beyond a local reading public as well as the result of a consideration striving for aesthetic perfection: he now regarded two languages in one work as a contradiction that reduced the value of a piece of art (preface to *Rajab Efendī*). In matters of language, Taymūr began to become the purist as which he would later be remembered.

13.1.6 The 1930s and 1940s

From this time on, the author’s private life developed rather “smoothly” (Brugman), but with two major exceptions: the deaths of his father (1930) and son (1940). As an author, he gained more and more confidence in himself, evidenced by not only his turn to the more complex novel genre but also the fact that, in 1937, he brought out a collection of stories that contained exclusively revised versions of texts from his first three books, under the title *al-Wathba al-ūlā* (The First Step), implying that in the meantime he had transcended this early stage and reached maturity. This was paralleled by the edition of collected articles and lectures on “The Beginnings and Development of Fiction” (*Nushū’ al-qīṣṣa wa-taṭawwuruhā*, 1936) and “Our Need for Art” (*Ḥājatunā ilā l-fann*, 1937), which suggest that the maturation process was accompanied by theoretical reflection. By the end of the 1930s Taymūr also seems to have gained the recognition which literary circles had denied him as a member of the Modern School, and must have felt he had become something of a celebrity; otherwise he would hardly have opened his 1939 collection, *Fir‘awn al-ṣaghīr* (Little Pharaoh), with an autobiographical essay entitled “The Sources Which Inspired My Writing” (*al-Maṣādir allatī alhamatnī l-kitāba*). On the other hand, the achievement of a maturity in

crafting the short story genre also meant, according to critics and literary historians, that in spite of uninterrupted production, rewriting (to improve style or plot), rearrangement and republishing, Taymūr from now on was not adding anything substantially new to the field. By and large, this may be true with regard to narrative technique and his fondness for certain modes such as the grotesque, the tragicomical, the satirical, or the simple sketch, as well as perhaps with regard to the stories' personnel and setting, although a shift in preference from rural to urban may be observed in his later *œuvre*. Thus, whereas peasants or village sheikhs and imams had been the favorite subjects of the early collections, now urban characters such as government officials and employees, writers and actors or, from the lower social strata, craftsmen, artisans, shopkeepers, workers, caretakers, woman matchmakers, and also the marginalized – orphans, beggars, tramps, prostitutes – became more present from the 1930s onwards. Together with the psychological turn there is also a shift away from the exotist predilection for the queer and extreme (e.g., religious obsessions, insanity, strange cases of superstition) to more common, everyday problems and situations. There is, for example, the hard social reality seen through the eyes of a child whom his brutal foster-father forces to sell sweets in the streets (title story of *Nabbūt al-khafīr*, *The Guardian's Stick*, 1958); the mocking exposure of sensational journalism (*Najāḥ mi'a bi-l-mi'a*, *A Hundred Percent Successful*, in the same collection); the moving description of a woman beggar who has to decide whether she should sacrifice her honour or pass up an opportunity to provide for her child's living (*Umm Shahlūl*, *Shahlūl's Mother*, in *Thā'irūn*, *Rebels*, 1955); or a biting satire on the hypocrisy and cringing of some lower officials (*Jā'a l-shitā'*, *Winter has come*, *ibid.*).

Strangely enough, in his first full-length novel, *Nidā' al-majhūl* (1939; translated as *The Call of the Unknown*, 1964), Taymūr departs from the realism and Egyptianness of his previous fiction. The events take place in the Lebanese mountains and consist of a rather fantastic adventure, a "Gothic romance" which at the same time can be read as a "novel of spiritual quest" (de Moor 1998b), of "man's search for something more meaningful than the surface truths of social existence" (Jad 1983). The text was announced as the story of a girl who "loved truly and faithfully, but suffered disappointment from her Beloved, therefore left her country and made her imagination the place of her adventures, searching for an unknown (...) whom she could make her guide". This can serve as a metaphorical description of a widespread feeling among intellectuals on the eve of World War II, almost two decades after the uprising of 1919. Nationalist intellectuals had seen their former ideals being shattered by political, economical and social reality, and were now suffering from disillusionment. Many of them turned to radical ideologies (socialism, communism, fascism, Islamism – the longing for a guide,

a leader, a ‘Führer’!), while others, among them the Taymūr of *Nidā’ al-majhūl*, tried to cope with the situation by resorting to the unfathomable, the mysterious, the mystical.

Obviously not satisfied with this kind of solution, he too fell prey later to ‘stronger’ ideas (though only for a moment). His pensiveness gave way to a sort of Darwinism that sought to retrieve at least *something* positive from the pre-war and war situation. In the essay “al-Ṭabī‘a al-qāhira” (The Cruelty of Nature, in *Iṭr wa-dukhān*, Perfume and Smoke, c. 1945), for instance, he holds that life is essentially a fight for survival and that this “law of nature” is always for the benefit of humanity “because it exterminates the weak who are of no use to the world”; accordingly, also wars are seen as “an appropriate means to remove unsuccessful civilisations, to absorb weak states”.

13.1.7 A new field to discover: drama

Fortunately, Taymūr the writer soon outgrew Taymūr the ‘philosopher’, and his essentially humanist attitude vis-à-vis the struggling of his characters as well as his sense of realism and detail reclaimed the upper hand over implicit contempt of the weak and ideological platitude. An indication for this ‘recovery’ is his entering into what Nazīh al-Ḥakīm lists as a next stage after the sentimental, the analytical, the local colour, and the novelistic approaches – drama. With the exception of *al-Infijār* (The Explosion), subtitled “A theatrical piece intended for reading” and published within a collection of short stories (*al-Ḥājj Shalabī*, 1930), Taymūr had not tried his hand at drama before the mid-1930s, and three pieces which he probably wrote in the second half of the decade. During the war years, however, he suddenly came out with no less than ten plays. Many of them were issued in two versions, one in the Egyptian colloquial (intended for the stage), and one in *fuṣṣḥā* (standard written Arabic, for reading). They are either comedies or social drama set in contemporary Egypt, or historical plays dealing mostly with more ‘eternal’ questions. While the early one-acters for the most part satirise “the weakness and pretensions of the upper classes” (Badawi 1987, 90) – *Ḥakamat al-maḥkama* (The Court Rules, early 1940s but published only in 1963) being an exception in that it deals with a case of baby murder in the countryside, two other plays of the first half of the 1940s clearly let the reader/spectator feel the pulse of the Second World War: *al-Makhba’ raqm talattāshar* (Shelter No. 13, 1941) describes the emotions and reactions of some Egyptians of different social standing who become trapped in an air-raid shelter, while in *Qanābil* (Bombs, 1943) – “perhaps Taymūr’s greatest comedy”, according to Badawi (1987, 98) – the author

“delights both in revealing the hollowness of most people’s pretexts, as well as in pointing out the gulf that exists in Egyptian society between town and country” (Landau 1958, 151), taking as his starting point a situation where the city lives in fear of bombardments during the war. Another play, quite similar in intent and pointing to a realist ‘recovery’, is *Ḥaflat shāy* (A Tea-Party, 1942, together with *al-Munqidha*), “perhaps the best Arabic farce” (again Badawi), “a hilarious though scathing satire on the blind imitation of Western manners (Badawi 1987, “Introduction”, 6) and “the emptiness of French-inspired snobbery” (Landau 1958, 254). Unlike the characters in these plays who are all very lifelike and “seem copied *in toto* from everyday society in Egypt” (ibid., 152), those of the other war-time productions – ‘*Arūs al-Nīl* (The Bride of the Nile), *Suhād* [heroine’s name], ‘*Awālī* [heroine’s name], *al-Munqidha* (The Woman Saviour), and *Ḥawwā’ al-khālida* (Eternal Eve), all published 1942–45 and all set somewhere in the Arab or pharaonic past – appear quite artificial, and the themes seem either fairly romantic or rather studied (again ‘philosopher-like’). They all center around female protagonists. The picture of woman as emerging from these texts is however a very traditional one; the author ascribes to the ‘fair sex’ certain unchanging, essentially ‘feminine’ features (as the title “Eternal Eve” already suggests), and it is another “law of nature” that woman can never be man’s equal.

The dualism, just observed, of down-to-earth realism and pseudo-philosophical idealism and abstraction in search of ‘universal truths’ (where Taymūr is certainly not at his best) continues right into the author’s post-war writings – and can be observed in the field of short story, novel and drama alike. Thus, on the one hand, the writer goes on to depict the various everyday problems, hopes and yearnings of his fellow-countrymen, studies both peasant and urban personalities as well as their social situations. As a result of the war-time experience, one can detect in many of these works a sharper edge or even a shift to socially committed literature (as de Moor 1998 and Brugman 1984, 259, have it). In the novel *Kilyūbātra fī Khān al-Khalīlī* (Cleopatra in Khān al-Khalīlī, 1946), for instance, Taymūr sits in judgment on politicians and the world of international congresses, using satire in order to describe the seemingly inescapable temptation of power and the mechanisms of moral decay. *Salwā fī mahabb al-rīḥ* (Salwā in the Whirlwind, 1947), subtitled “an Egyptian story” and probably the author’s best-known novel, is dedicated to the difficult circumstances now faced by the New Woman in the wake of the war. By now she had gained a high degree of self-consciousness and freedom, but that had only exacerbated her sense of privation as social conditions succeeded in preventing her from living the way she would like; as a result, she was blown to and fro by the “whirlwinds” of fate, personalised partly through the men on whom she had to set her hopes.

On the other hand, there is still a tendency to abstraction, intellectualisation, and studied intervention, a feature that may perhaps originate in his early romantic idealism and/or be based on his notion of the writer as a thinker and authority of learning, but which sometimes interferes with or superimposes itself on his quest for realism. As Funk has observed (1969, 94), Taymūr's short stories at this period usually lack specific temporal or spatial coordinates. Two plays of the earlier post-war years are again set in the Arab past and thus show his inclination towards 'literary' subjects: *al-Yawm khamr* (Wine Today, 1949) retells the life of the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays and *Ibn Jalā* (Ibn Jalā, 1951) that of the famous Umayyad governor, al-Hajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 714); both are meant to deal with universal human problems, for which the author thought a 'dignified' classical Arabic to be the most appropriate level of language.

The 'aristocratic' style which Taymūr also utilised, one that is "usually lucid, precise and economical", yet quite "*deliberately* made to sound suggestive of the Arabic of the classical age"; one that is therefore not entirely free of mannerisms and that Jad describes very aptly as that of a "philologist and classical Arabic revivalist" (Jad 1983, 124), this style, together with his services to Arabic literature as a pioneer of the short story, eventually earned Taymūr the First Story Prize of the Academy of the Arabic Language in 1947, followed two years later by membership of the same institution. In 1950 he was awarded the King Fu'ād Prize for Literature. Until then, the author had affirmed his aesthetic conservatism not only through his fiction and drama, but also in an account of his journey to the United States (*Abū l-Hawl yaḥīr*, The Flight of the Sphinx, 1947) as well as in a number of essays, collected in *Fann al-qaṣaṣ* (The Art of Story-Telling, with an Introduction to the Case of the Arabic Language, 1945) and the above-mentioned *ʿIṭr wa-dukhān* (Perfume and Smoke, c. 1945), subtitled *Khawāṭir wa-maqālāt fī l-adab wa-l-fann wa-l-masrah* (Reflections and articles on literature, art, and theater).

13.1.8 After the 1952 Revolution

Despite Taymūr's 'aristocratic' origins, the Revolution of 1952, which sought to abolish the *ancien régime*, did no damage to his reputation. Although some hostile voices maintained that, "as an aristocrat, he knew nothing about the life of the common people or their feelings" (Paxton 1974, 177), he was awarded the first-class decoration for Distinguished Services in 1962 and in the following year the State Prize for Literature, clearly showing that, despite his earlier monarchist af-

filiations, he was acceptable to the new regime. Judging from his play *al-Muzayyafūn* (The False Ones, 1953), written before 1952, he had already sensed the need for, and indeed been in favour of, political change. The novella/novel *Thā'irūn* (Rebellious Ones, 1955) may even be taken as evidence for the idea that, at least at that particular moment, the author had not managed to avoid the spell of revolutionary pathos and identified Nasser as that strong leader whose advent one of the protagonists had so longed for in the closing scene of *al-Muzayyafūn*. The novel retells the events of the last seven months before the Egyptian Revolution of July 23, 1952, through the lives of three young Egyptians who rebel against the prevailing pre-revolutionary conditions.

Yet it goes without saying that Taymūr never became a 'revolutionary.' It is true that in his later fiction he can slip into the role of underprivileged protagonists so convincingly that he manages to make even criminal acts of rebellion plausible. Furthermore, he obviously also felt no difficulty in harmonising his own ideas concerning the role of literature in society with the concept of *littérature engagée* that became a postulate of the new times: in 1959 he published a collection of essays under the title *al-Adab al-hādif* (Committed Literature) in which he stressed that "the writer is a helper of mankind in the widest sense" and that "the products of his pen will soon lead society to new horizons and give them the confidence they need in order to fight the struggle for life successfully". Even so the writer who penned these words is clearly more a humanist nobleman than a proletarian socialist.

Taymūr continued to write until briefly before his death, but, as a work such as *Shumrūkh* (A Stalk of Dates, 1958; revised as *al-Dhahab al-aswad*, Black Gold, 1965) makes clear (it being a novel about the political and social implications of the discovery of oil in an imaginary "Oil-Land", *Zaytistān*), he always remained the observer, the analyst, the visionary warner, without ever becoming a rebellious activist. Since he was already in his sixties during the early years of the Egyptian Revolution, he may well have been too old for such a role in any case. Schoonover, who met him around 1957, describes him as "mild in speech, courteous in manner, careful in attire, ... in every way the gentleman and scholar the Taymūr family represents" (Schoonover 1986, 36). He clearly regarded himself more as a member of the Language Academy than a child of the Revolution. Of his twenty-odd books on Arabic language and literature, three-quarters were written after he had been elevated to the Academy's olympus. Among these, *Mu'jam al-ḥaḍāra* (The Dictionary of [Modern] Civilisation, 1961) deserves special attention. Taymūr here picks up the thread of his earlier work, *Mushkilāt al-lughā al-'arabiyya* (Problems of the Arabic Language, 1956), where he had already advocated the Arabisation of loanwords from European languages. In the later

work, he tries to provide Arabic equivalents for a large number of terms. As a linguistic purist and authority, he also composed a children's story intended for class reading, *Qunfudha wa-Amūra wa-mā jarà la-humā fī l-junayna al-maṣḥūra* (Qunfudha and Amūra and What Happened to Them in the Enchanted Garden, 1968?).

Maḥmūd Taymūr died in 1973 in Lausanne/Switzerland where he had gone for medical treatment.

13.1.9 Reception

Taymūr's life and work have become the subject of numerous studies, some of them not a little hagiographic. Histories of modern Arabic literature remember him foremost as a pioneer of the modern Arabic short story, and the remainder of his vast output has not really been able to add to his fame. Other authors – Najīb Maḥfūz in the field of the novel, Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm in that of drama – are considered the great pioneers. Among his plays, the non-historical, non-abstract, realist ones, especially the comedies and farces, are usually regarded as his best. The novels have had a rather ambiguous reception: some critics (e.g. Vial 1986) hold that, as a master of the short story, he should not have turned to another genre at all, while others (e.g. Jad 1983) mainly criticise his stylistic classicism as being inappropriate mannerisms in certain places. Still others (e.g. Ḥusayn 1988) point out that he often failed to write up to his own standards; in his own essays on literary theory, for example, he maintained that an author should not impose himself on his own characters, a feature that, according to Ḥusayn, is not translated with sufficient consistency into his own narratives.

Throughout his life, Taymūr contributed to the literary life of his country, writing articles in various newspapers, reviews and journals, and touring Egypt and the Arab world giving public lectures on Arabic language and literature. He was highly sought-after as a participant in interviews and discussions, and also renowned as a great patron and promoter of younger talents. Today, his short stories continue to be read as classics of modern Arabic literature, while the novels and plays are viewed more as documents of a distant past.

13.2 Maḥmūd Taymūr's works

13.2.1 Titles in Arabic

- al-Shaykh Jum'a, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā* (Shaykh Jum'a, and other stories, Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Salafiyya, 1925).
- 'Amm Mitwallī [Mutawallī], wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā* ('Amm Mitwallī, and other stories, Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Salafiyya, 1925).
- Fann al-qaṣaṣ* (The Art of Storytelling, Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Raghā'ib, 1925).
- al-Shaykh Sayyid al-'abī, wa-aqāṣīs ukhrā* (Shaykh Sayyid the Fool, and other stories, Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Salafiyya, 1926); contains as an introduction a study that was published in 1936 in an enlarged version as *Nushū' al-qīṣa wa-taṭawwuruhā* (see below).
- Rajab Afandī: qīṣa miṣriyya* (Rajab Efendī: an Egyptian Story, Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Salafiyya, 1928).
- al-Ḥājj Shalabī, wa-aqāṣīs ukhrā* (Ḥājj Shalabī, and other stories, Cairo: Maṭba'at al-l-timād, 1930); includes *al-Infjār* (The Explosion), a one-act play intended for reading.
- "al-Nizā' bayn al-fuṣḥā wa-l-'āmmiyya fī l-adab al-miṣrī al-ḥadīth" (The Clash of Standard and Colloquial Arabic in Modern Egyptian Literature), *al-Hilāl* 41 (1931): 185–188.
- Abū 'Alī 'āmil artiste, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā* (Abū 'Alī Trying as an Artist, and other stories, Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Salafiyya, 1934); revised as *Abū 'Alī al-fannān* (1954, see below).
- al-Atlāl: riwāya qaṣaṣiyya miṣriyya, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā* (The Ruins: an Egyptian Fictional Story, and other stories, Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Salafiyya, 1934); revised as *Shabāb wa-ghāniyāt*, in: *Shabāb wa-ghāniyāt, wa-aqāṣīs ukhrā* (1951, see below).
- Nushū' al-qīṣa wa-taṭawwuruhā* (Growth and Development of the Story, Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Salafiyya, 1936).
- al-Shaykh 'Afā Allāh, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā* (Shaykh 'Afā Allāh, and other stories, Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-Salafiyya, 1936); reprinted as *Zāmir al-ḥayy* (1953, see below).
- Thalāth masraḥiyyāt min faṣl wāḥid* (Three One-Act Plays, Cairo: Maṭba'at 'Atāyā, n.d. [1942?; Nazīh al-Ḥakīm gives "Cairo: Muḥammad Ḥamdī, 1936"]); contains *Abū Shūsha*, *al-Mawḳib*, and *al-Ṣu'lūk*, all in Egyptian vernacular (later republished in *fuṣḥā*).
- Ḥājatunā ilā l-fann* (Our Need for Art, Cairo: Dār al-Nashr al-Ḥadīth, 1937).
- al-Wathba al-ūlā* (The First Step, Cairo: Dār al-Nashr al-Ḥadīth, 1937); revised versions of stories from the first three collections.
- Qalb ghāniya, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā* (Cairo: Dār al-Nashr al-Ḥadīth, 1937).
- Fir'awn al-saghīr, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā* (Little Pharaoh, Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ma'ārif, 1939); includes as its preface *al-Maṣādir allatī alhamat-nī al-kitāba*.
- Nidā' al-majhūl* (The Call of the Unknown, Beirut: Dār al-Makshūf, 1939).
- Maktūb 'alā l-jabīn, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā* (Written on the Forehead, and other stories, Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ma'ārif, 1941).
- Ḥūriyyat al-bahr* (The Sea-Houri, Beirut: Dār al-Makshūf, 1941).
- 'Arūs al-Nīl: masraḥiyya ghinā'iyya bi-l-'āmmiyya* (Nile Bride: a Musical Play in the Vernacular, Cairo: Dār Majallat al-Ḥawādith [?], 1941); revised as *Fidā'* (1951).
- al-Makhba' raqm 13 [talattāshar]* (Shelter No. 13, Cairo: Dār Majallat al-Ḥawādith [?], 1941 [?]); annotated phonemic transcription by Stig T. Rasmussen (København: Akad. Forl., 1979).

Abū Shūsha wa-l-Mawḳib: masraḥiyyatān bi-l-‘arabiyya al-fuṣṣḥā (Abū Shūsha and The Procession: Two Plays in *fuṣṣḥā*, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Taraqqī, 1942; Damascus: Maktabat al-Taḳaddum, 1943).

‘Awālī: masraḥiyya bi-l-‘arabiyya al-fuṣṣḥā fī thalāthat fuṣūl (‘Awālī: a Three-Act Play in *fuṣṣḥā*, Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya al-Kubrā / M. al-Istiḳāma, 1942).

al-Munqidha, wa-Haflat shāy (The Savior, and The Tea-Party, Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ahliyya, 1942).

Qāl al-rāwī (The Narrator Said, Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya al-Kubrā, 1942).

Suhād, aw al-Laḥn al-tā’ih: masraḥiyya ‘arabiyya bi-l-fuṣṣḥā fī thalāthat fuṣūl (Suhād, or The Lost Melody: an Arabic Three-Act Play in *fuṣṣḥā*, Cairo: ‘Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1942).

Qanābil (Bombs, Cairo: Lajnat al-Nashr li-l-Jāmi‘iyyīn, 1943).

Bint al-shayṭān, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā (Satan’s Daughter, and other stories, Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1944).

‘Iṭr wa-dukhān: khawāṭir wa-maqālāt fī l-adab wa-l-fann wa-l-masraḥ (Perfume and Smoke: Ideas on Literature, Art, and Theatre, Cairo: Lajnat al-Nashr li-l-Jāmi‘iyyīn, Maktabat Miṣr, 1944/45).

Fann al-qaṣaṣ, ma’a taqdīm fī qaḍiyyat al-lugha al-‘arabiyya wa-nusakh min aḥdath aqāṣīs al-mu’allif (The Art of Story-Telling, with an Introduction Concerning the Arabic Language Issue, and the Latest Specimens of the Author’s Stories, Cairo: Majallat al-Sharq al-Jadīd / Dār al-Hilāl, 1945).

Ḥawwā’ al-khālida (Eternal Eve, Cairo: Dār al-Istiḳāma, 1945).

Kilyūbātra [Cleopatra] fī Khān al-Khalīlī (Cleopatra in Khan al-Khalili, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Istiḳāma, 1946).

Shifāh ghalīza, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā (Thick Lips, and other Stories, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Istiḳāma, 1946).

Abū l-hawl yaṭīr (The Sphinx Takes Off, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Istiḳāma, 1947).

Salwā fī mahabb al-rīḥ: Qīṣa miṣriyya (Salwa Blowing the Wind, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1947).

Khalf al-lithām (Behind the Veil, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Kātib al-Miṣrī, 1948); partially reprinted as *Dunyā jadīda* (1957, see below).

Iḥsān li-llāh, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā (Charity for God, and other stories, Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1949).

al-Yawm khamr (Today It’s Wine, Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1949 [?; “1945” according to others]).

Khuṭuwāt ‘alā l-shallāl (Steps in the Rapids, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Kaylānī al-Ṣaghīr, 1950).

Kull ‘ām wa-antum bi-khayr, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā (Happy New Year!, and other stories, Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1950).

Malāmiḥ wa-ghuḍūn: ṣuwar khāṭifa li-shakhṣiyyāt lāmi’a (Features and Issues: Impressions about Prominent People, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1950); repr. as *al-Shakhṣiyyāt al-ish-rūn* (Twenty Personalities, 1969).

Ḍabṭ al-kitāba al-‘arabiyya (Writing Arabic, Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Istiḳāma, 1951).

Fidā’ (Sacrifice, Cairo: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, 1951); revised version of *‘Arūs al-Nīl* (1941).

Ibn Jalāl ([a name], Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1951).

al-Nabī al-insān, wa-maqālāt ukhrā (The Prophet [as] a Human Being, and other articles, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, [194?; 1951, 1956, or 1959, according to others]).

Shabāb wa-ghāniyāt, wa-aqāṣīs ukhrā (Young Folk and Pretty Girls, Cairo: ‘Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1951); previously published as *al-Aṭlāl* (1934, see above).

Shifā’ al-rūḥ (Soul’s Cure, Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-‘Arabī, 1951).

- Abū l-Shawārib, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā* ([a name, meaning:] The One with the Moustache, and other stories], Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1953).
- Ashṭar min Iblīs* (Cleverer than the Devil, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1953).
- al-Muzayyafūn: masraḥiyya miṣriyya fī sittat fuṣūl* (The Forgers: an Egyptian Six-Act Play, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1953).
- Kidhb fī kidhb: masraḥiyya miṣriyya fī arba'at fuṣūl* (Lie Upon Lie: an Egyptian Four-Act Play, Cairo: Maṭba'at Miṣr, 1953); *fuṣḥā* version of *Kidb fī kidb* (staged 1952, but never published in the vernacular).
- Zāmīr al-ḥayy* (Quarter Flautist, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1953); previously published as *al-Shaykh 'Afā Allāh* (1936, see above).
- Abū 'Alī al-fannān* (Abū 'Alī the Artist, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1954); revised version of *Abū 'Alī 'āmil artist* (1934, see above).
- Thā'irūn* (Revolutionaries, Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1955); the title story is a long narrative classified as a novel by some.
- Kalimāt al-ḥayāh al-'amma* (A Word on Life in General, Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Istiḳāma, [1956]).
- Mushkilāt al-lughā al-'arabiyya* (Problems in the Arabic Language, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1956).
- Ṣaqr Quraysh: masraḥiyya 'arabiyya* (The Falcon of Quraysh: an Arabic Play, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1956).
- Ṭāriq al-Andalus* (Ṭāriq of Andalusia, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1956).
- Dirāsāt fī l-qīṣa wa-l-masraḥ* (Studies on Fiction and Drama, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1957 [?; Funk gives 1950]).
- Dunyā jadīda* (A New World, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1957); partial reprint of *Khalf al-lithām* (1940, see above).
- Muḥāḍarāt fī l-qāṣaṣ fī adab al-'arab: māḥiṭhi wa-ḥāḍiruh* (Lectures on Arabic Literature, Past and Present, Cairo: al-Jāmi'a al-'Arabiyya, 1958).
- Shumrūkh: riwāya qāṣaṣiyya* ([personal name], Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1958); revised as *al-Dhahab al-aswad* (The Black Gold, Cairo: Wizārat al-Tarbiya, 1965).
- Nabbūt al-khafīr* (The Guard's Cudgel, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1958).
- Shams wa-layl* (Sun and Night, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1958).
- Tamr ḥinnā 'ajab* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1958).
- al-Adab al-hādīf* (Committed Literature, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1959).
- Ilā l-liqā' ayyuhā l-ḥubb* (Farewell, O Love, Cairo: al-Sharika al-'Arabiyya li-l-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr, 1959).
- al-Maṣābīḥ al-zurq* (Blue Lamps, Cairo: al-Nāshir al-Ḥadīth, 1960).
- Anā l-qātil, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā* (I'm the Murderer, and other stories, Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr / Dār al-Qalam, 1961).
- Mu'jam al-ḥaḍāra* (Lexicon of Civilisation, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1961).
- Munājayāt li-l-kutub wa-l-kuttāb* (Intimations on Books and Writers, Cairo: Dār al-Jīl, 1962).
- Intiṣār al-ḥayāh, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā* (Life's Victory, and other stories, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1963).
- Jazīrat al-jayb: siyāḥa fī Ṭāliyā, wa-mashāhid ukhrā* (The Pocket Isle: a Tour in Italy, and views of other places, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1963).
- Khamsa wa-khmēsa (khumaysah)* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmiyya, 1963); includes as its first item *Ḥakamat al-maḥkama*, translated by Medhat Shaheen as *The Court Rules*, in: *Arabic Writing Today: Drama*, ed. Mahmoud Manzalaoui (Cairo: American Research Center in Egypt, 1977), 53-63.
- Ṭalā'ī al-masraḥ al-'arabī* (Early Phases of Arabic Theater, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1963).

Ẓilāl muḍīḥah: falsafat al-fann wa-mushkilat al-mujtamaʿ wa-l-ḥayāh (Shadows in the Light: Philosophy of Art and the Issue of Society and Life, Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1963).

al-Adīb bayn al-fann wa-l-ḥayāh (The Littérateur between Art and Life, Cairo: Maktabat al-ʿĀlam al-ʿArabī, 1965 [?]).

al-Bārūna Umm Aḥmad, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā (Baroness Umm Aḥmad, and other stories, Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1967).

Adab wa-udabāʾ (Literature and Littérateurs, Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabī, 1968); reviews, criticism, literary-autobiographical essays.

al-Ayyām al-miʿa, wa-mashāhid ukhrā (A Hundred Days, and other impressions, Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, 1968); includes *al-Ayyām al-miʿa*, *Khuṭuwāt ʿalā l-shallāl* (republished), *Ilā madīnat al-naṣr*, and *Abū l-Hawl yatakallam, Ḥikāyat Abū ʿAwf, wa-qīṣaṣ ukhrā* (Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, 1969).

Qunfudha wa-Amūra wa-mā jarā lahumā fī l-junayna al-mashhūrah: ḥaddūta (Qunfudha [Little Hedgehog] and Amūra and What Happened to Them in the Enchanted Garden: a Tale, Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, 1968 [?]).

Bayn al-miṭraqa wa-l-sindān (Between Hammer and Anvil, Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabī, 1969).

Maʾbūd min ṭīn (Clay Idol, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1969).

Ittijāhāt al-adab al-ʿarabī fī l-sinīn al-miʿa al-akhīra (Literary Tendencies in the Last Hundred Years, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1970).

al-Shakhṣiyyāt al-ʾishrūn: ṣuwar li-shakhṣiyyāt min al-māḍī al-qarīb (Twenty Personalities: Portraits of Persons from the Recent Past, Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1970); reprint of *Malāmiḥ wa-ghuḍūn* (1950).

Zawj fī l-mazād (Marriage for Auction, Alexandria: Dār al-Kutub al-Jāmiʿiyya, 1970?).

Bint al-yawm (Today's Girl, Cairo: Muʾassasat Akhbār al-Yawm, 1971).

al-Qīṣa fī l-adab al-ʿarabī, wa-buḥūth ukhrā (The Story in Arabic Literature, and other studies, Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1971).

13.2.2 Works in Translation

Collections and Novels

Mahmoud Teymour, *Tales from Egyptian Life*, translated by Denys Johnson-Davies (Cairo: The Renaissance Bookshop, 1949).

Bonne Fête (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1954); French translation of *Kull ʾām wa-antum bi-khayr* (1950) and nine other stories.

Mahmoud Teymour, *The Call of the Unknown*, translated by Hume Horan (Beirut: Khayats, 1964); translation of *Nidāʾ al-majhūl*.

Mahmoud Teymour, *Sensuous Lips, and other stories*, translated by Nayla Naguib (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organisation, 1993).

Single Stories

“Summer Journey”, translated by Denys Johnson-Davies, in *Modern Arabic Short Stories* (London: Heinemann, 1976 [originally Oxford University Press, 1967]), 167–172.

"The Enemy", translated by Anthony McDermott, in *Arabic Writing Today: The Short Story*, ed. Mahmoud Manzalaoui (Cairo: The American Research Center in Egypt, 1968), 47–53.

Plays

Shelter No. 13 (København: Akad. Forl., 1979); annotated phonemic transcription of *al-Makhba' raqm 13 [talattāshar]* (1941?), by Stig T. Rasmussen.

"The Court Rules", translated by Medhat Shaheen, in: *Arabic Writing Today: Drama*, ed. Mahmoud Manzalaoui (Cairo: American Research Center in Egypt, 1977), 53–63; translation of *Ḥakamat al-maḥkama* (first item in *Khamsa wa-khmēsa*, 1963).

Articles

"Le Conflit des langues arabes dans la littérature égyptienne moderne", in *Actes du 18^e Congrès International des Orientalistes*, Leiden 1932; translation of "al-Nizā' bayn al-fuṣṣḥā wa-l-ʿāmmiyya fī l-adab al-miṣrī al-ḥadīth" (1931).

Other

Muḥammad Taymūr, *Mu'allafāt* ("Works"), ed. Maḥmūd Taymūr, 3 vols.: 1. *Wamīḍ al-rūḥ* ("Sparks from the Spirit"; includes as "Book 4" the first edition of *Mā tarāhu al-ʿuyūn*, "What the Eyes See"), 2. *Ḥayātunā al-tamthīliyya* ("Our Theater Live"), 3. *al-Masraḥ al-miṣrī* ("Egyptian Theater") (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-lʿtimād, 1922).

Muḥammad Taymūr, *Mā tarāhu al-ʿuyūn* ("What the Eyes See"), 2nd edition, ed. Maḥmūd Taymūr (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Salafiyya, 1927).

Majallat al-Qiṣṣa, general editor Maḥmūd Taymūr (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Irshād al-Qawmī, Jan. 1964 – Aug. 1965); monthly, suspended with no. 20.

14 The *Modern School* and global modernity

The example of an Egyptian ghost story of the mid-1920s: Maḥmūd Ṭāhir Lāshīn's *Qisṣat 'ifrīt*

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This chapter is the third chapter in Part V which I called “The Nahḍa at its zenith”. While Chapter 12 showed a representative of the Modern School (ʿĪsā ʿUbayd) in the ‘Yes, we can!’ mood of early Arab nation-building and thereby probably fulfilled expectations raised by the term ‘zenith’ as meaning a kind of glorious ‘culmination’, Chapter 13 with its survey of the life and works of Maḥmūd Taymūr, another member of the Modern School, has already begun to make clear that this ‘zenith’ is not only a point of culmination but also a turning point, a moment of change at which the developments that have led up to here come to an end, giving way to something new. The ‘zenith’/culmination of the Nahḍa thus also means, in a way, its end.

But there are various types of ‘endings’. In the case of Taymūr, we could observe that the moment the author no longer felt a need for self-assertion as (a mouthpiece of) the new national subject with the help of local colour, he had his ‘psychological turn’, which combined attention to local specificity (characters, the “Egyptian personality”, social milieu, etc.) with an interest in the general human condition. The emerged subject’s quest for self-assertion thereby became sublimated, its rationalist-analytical-critical mode quasi merging with the sentimentalist and other modes to produce a new quality. This is also true, *mutatis mutandis*, for Taymūr’s post-World War II call for an *adab hādīf*, i.e., committed literature, which not only shows the influence of Sartre (*littérature engagée*), but equally its provenience from the reformist thinking of Nahḍawī intellectuals and their belief in their mission in the service of the “social body”, the *hayʾa ijtimāʿiyya*. Thus, in the case of Taymūr (but also others), the Nahḍa is not dead after having reached its zenith; rather, it lives on in a modified form, in modernist mutations, so to speak.

In contrast, in the chapter below, we will become witness to a case where the zenith also could mean ‘crisis’, and even ‘death’. In my reading of the “Ghost Story” of yet another member of the Modern School, Maḥmūd Ṭāhir Lāshīn, fundamental Nahḍawī convictions are being questioned, and only a few years after the publication of this story, the author (and many of his contemporaries) fall in

utmost despair after having gone through a phase of deep disenchantment and disillusion, because they started to lose, and eventually gave up, all hope in the Nahḍa ideals. It is true that Lāshīn in the “Ghost Story” reaches a degree of technical mastery and artistic sophistication that fulfils all the requirements of the type of advanced, ‘modern’ storytelling that the Modern School dreamt of and had postulated as an indispensable precondition for obtaining recognition among the (literatures of the) nations of the contemporary ‘civilised world’. On the other hand, what meant the fulfilment of the Nahḍawī dream of perfection in the field of narrative technique in face of a shattered belief in the agency of the rational subject, as topicalised in “A Ghost Story”? The story challenges the hitherto unquestioned belief in the non-existence of the supernatural and in the capability of the reason-gifted human subject to deal with any attack on the rational constitution of the world. It replaces the belief in Reason as the all-reliable instrument in dealing with the world with a statement of uncertainty, of impotence instead of former agency, and of a disenchanted sobriety instead of the exuberance of previous ‘Yes, we can!’ optimism. In another of Lāshīn’s stories, *Ḥadīth al-qarya* (“Village Small Talk”, 1929), published only a few years after the “Ghost Story”, the author will expand on the ironical style used in the latter to point to the eclatant discrepancies and irreconcilable contrasts, using irony to highlight the ridiculously ‘tragical’ position of the enlightened urban intellectual who, by enthusiastically trying to explain to a group of ignorant villagers the importance of human self-determination and the Free Will, reaches the exact contrary, namely that they follow their local sheikh into even deeper darkness. Again a few years later, in his novel *Ḥawwā’ bi-lā Ādam* (“Eve without Adam”, 1934), the author goes still a step farther in that he lets the heroine – representative of all the best Nahḍawī virtues – commit suicide, as her successful self-emancipation from a milieu characterised by poverty and superstition does not help her in any way to find personal love. In the light of the obvious persistence of social barriers, her exemplary Nahḍawī career does not only appear as highly questionable; rather, the whole educational and self-emancipatory project, the formation along Nahḍawī principles, seems to be something artificial, while the superstitious grandmother’s belief in charms emerges from the story as ‘authentically Egyptian’, as did the belief in ghosts in the “Ghost Story” and in the deterring warning example told by the ignorant village sheikh in “Village Small Talk”.

This chapter thus re-addresses the question of periodisation, raised already in several preceding chapters, on two levels: Nahḍa-internal and -external. As for the first, it seems that we can discern at least four major stages in the history of the Nahḍa: a “reproductionist” phase, a “creativist” phase, a stage of consolidation (when the emerging subject is politicised and expresses itself as national

subject, the Nahḍa at its zenith), and a last stage (when Nahḍawī objectives are either given up or integrated in other, less subject-focused projects). The other level is that of the Nahḍa's temporalities as compared to 'global' temporalities. While previous chapters often recurred on Walter Falk's model of 'global' periods and the implicit assumption of 'multiple modernities' (Shmuel Eisenstadt), the chapter below tests another model, namely Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's "essay on historical simultaneity" as demonstrated in his seminal 'encyclopaedia' of the year 1926. Here, too, the result of the application of a universal model demonstrates that the Nahḍa's internal temporality is clearly compatible and coeval with a global temporalities.

* * *

The importance of Maḥmūd Ṭāhir Lāshīn (1894–1954) as a – or even the – "leading representative" of the so-called "New (or Modern) School", *al-Madrasa al-ḥadītha*, is widely acknowledged (Gamal 1980, 30). Sabry Hafez, for example, considers him the School's "major figure" and maintains – with good reason, I think – that his "arrival [...] on the Egyptian literary scene in the 1920s marked a turning-point in the history of modern Arabic narrative discourse in general and the short story in particular" (Hafez 1993, 215). Hafez also seems to be at the origin of Lāshīn's designation, so often repeated since, as the 'Chekhov of Egypt'.¹ And yet, the uncontested "fact" (Gamal 1980, 30) that he holds an eminent position in Egyptian, and Arabic, literary history and that he is therefore mentioned in almost every survey of modern Egyptian, and Arabic, fiction has lead only very few scholars to deal with his works in detail, and it is perhaps not exaggerated to call him still largely under-researched – especially so when compared with two of his fellow Modernists. Both Muḥammad Taymūr and his brother Maḥmūd have become the object of scholarly research in extensive monographies² and numerous articles. Not so Lāshīn. In 1980, Adel Sulayman Gamal, an Egyptian scholar then based in the US, had been awarded a grant by the University of Arizona to collect and study Lāshīn's unpublished works,³ but his investigations resulted in only one short article (Gamal 1980). Sabry Hafez (Ṣabrī Ḥāfiẓ) from SOAS, a life-long admirer of Lāshīn, dedicated the last two chapters of his *Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse* to the writer and to one of his stories, equating Lāshīn with "The

¹ Gamal 1980, 39, note 7, traces this 'label' back to an article of Hafez's on "Lāshīn and the Birth of the Egyptian Short Story", published in Arabic in *al-Majalla*, no. 134, February 1968.

² De Moor 1991 and Wielandt 1983, respectively.

³ Cf. http://fp.arizona.edu/neareast/Gamal_long_vita.htm (visited February 22, 2005; unfortunately not available any longer).

Maturation of the New Narrative Discourse”, and *Ḥadīth al-qarya* (Village Small Talk) with “The Culmination of a Sophisticated Discourse” (Hafez 1993, chs. 6–7, pp. 215–32 and 233–61, respectively);⁴ Hafez also edited Lāshīn’s complete œuvre together with an introductory study in Arabic (Ḥāfiẓ 1999). Apart from these and a few other studies, however, scholars have obviously not deemed Lāshīn worth further consideration.⁵

But not only Lāshīn is neglected. A similar research lacuna can be observed with regard to the “Modern School” as a whole. In their case, the lack of scholarly interest may be due to an underestimation, which in turn is obviously the result of the role which is usually ascribed to the movement by historians of Egyptian ‘national literature’. On the one hand, these historians generally hold the Modernists in high esteem, especially because of their “valuable contribution to furthering the development of the Arabic short story” (Gamal 1980, 28) and their role as “pioneers” (*ruwwād*) who paved the way for later developments in literature,

4 An English translation of *Ḥadīth al-Qarya* is given as an Appendix: Hafez 1993, 262–68.

5 Gamal (1980, 28) holds that Lāshīn, as “the most prolific writer” of the School, has been the subject of “not a few studies”, but he cannot mention a single monograph and, apart from the article by Hafez indicated in fn. 1 above, lists only a limited number of works in which Lāshīn is dealt with, mostly amongst others and/or *en passant*, e.g., S. Ḥ. al-Nassāj’s *Taṭawwur fann al-qīṣṣa al-qāṣira fi Miṣr* (1968), A. Ibrāhīm’s *al-Qīṣṣa al-miṣriyya* (1973), and Yaḥyà Ḥaqqī’s introductory forward to Lāshīn’s first collection, *Sukhrīyyat al-nāy* (1964). In European languages, the story which is most widely studied, is the already mentioned *Ḥadīth al-qarya*, from Lāshīn’s second collection of short stories, *Yuhkà anna...*, published in 1929; apart from Hafez’ study quoted above (fn. 4) and an earlier version of his ch. 6 (“The Maturation of the New Literary Genre”, *IJMES* 16 (1984): 367–389), there are two articles by Nieves Paradela (Alonso) that concentrate on this story, “Estructura narrativa y cruce de discursos en el relato *Ḥadīṯ al-qarya* de Maḥmūd Ṭāhir Lāshīn: la *juṭba* como elemento retórico”, *Miscelánea de Estudios árabes y Hebraicos: Sección árabe-Islam* 51 (2002): 219–243, and the earlier “Un escritor egipcio de entreguerras: Maḥmūd Ṭāhir Lāshīn y su cuento ‘Conversación en la aldea’”, *al-Andalus – Magreb* [Cádiz] 5 (1997): 235–254 (for the main part [244 sq.] a translation of *Ḥadīṯ al-qarya* into Spanish). Lāshīn’s novel *Ḥawwā’ bi-lā Ādam* (Eve without Adam, 1934) was translated into English by Saad el-Gabalawy, in id. 1986, 49–94. The translation is preceded by a short introduction-study by the translator. Hilary Kilpatrick treats the novel quite extensively in “*Ḥawwā’ bi-lā Ādam*: an Egyptian novel of the 1930’s”, *JAL* 4 (1973): 48–56, and again in her monograph on *The Modern Egyptian Novel: A Study in Social Criticism* (London: Ithaca, 1974), esp. 51–54. It is also mentioned, but not really analyzed or studied, by most of the common surveys of modern Egyptian fiction. Hafez, in a short note (1993, 303, endnote 87), maintains that the reason for the critics’ relative neglect of Lāshīn may be his “sarcastic and satirical attitude” with which he exposes “certain social phenomena”, elsewhere considered taboo, to public criticism; and a feeling of shame may also be responsible for concealing the author from European translators.

especially (social) realism. On the other hand, it is probably just this label, “pioneers”, which has been responsible for the lack of more, and more sincere, scholarly attention, since ‘pioneer’ almost inevitably means ‘still a bit immature’. And indeed, while praising the Modernists for their innovative approaches, most critics accuse them of continuing too many traits of nineteenth and early twentieth century writing, assigning them a position between what is generally termed Romanticism, and Realism: still too didactic, still a bit too ‘romantic’, still inclined to sentimentalism, not yet ‘genuine’ realists, and still too weak from the point of view of narrative technique⁶ (Lāshīn’s *Ḥadīth al-Qarya* being a more or less rare exception, the “culmination”, as Hafez has it, which is generally reached neither by Lāshīn himself nor by his colleagues). Needless to say that what is judged to be deficient and incomplete here is an “assimilation of the artistic features of the short story [...] as developed in the *West*” (Gamal 1980, 28, my emphasis), since for most histories of modern Egyptian literature (and modern Arabic literature in general) the Western model has always been the norm. As a consequence, the old Orientalist and Eurocentrist prejudice of a ‘lagging behind’ of Arabic literature (the ‘child’, or the ‘adolescent’) with regard to its Western counterparts (the ‘parents’, the ‘grown-ups’) has been perpetuated even by those native historians who usually praise the Modern School as a most progressive movement and as the creators of a truly Egyptian ‘national literature’, an authentic *adab qawmī*.

Looking at the literary production of the *Madrasa Ḥadītha* in this way, i.e., as representing the first pieces of ‘national literature’, is indeed very common – and surely not wrong, since the Modernists themselves wanted to create this ‘national literature’, and so the ‘national’ perspective will, in my opinion, always remain indispensable. Nevertheless it has produced another doxa. The idea that authenticity is to be reached by sticking to specifically *Egyptian* characters and themes, however successfully it may have become transformed into literature, has often earned them the verdict of being ‘too local’ with regard to their choice of subjects.⁷ And it has reduced the frame of possible investigation to an exclusively Egyptian context.

As a consequence, there are a number of aspects of both Lāshīn and the Modern School which have not been studied at all (although they may have been observed already and/or even mentioned repeatedly). In the present study, I will

⁶ For Lāshīn, e.g., Hafez talks of clear traces of “labour pains” (*ālām al-makhāḍ*) and a “primitivity” (*bidā’iyya*) that we cannot ignore despite its relative maturity”, cf. Ḥāfiẓ 1999, 48.

⁷ Gamal 1980, 29 sq., tries to establish a distinction between ‘sketches’ and ‘short stories’, maintaining that Lāshīn makes less use of local colour in the latter in order to allow for a wider, universal significance, while in the ‘sketches’ local colour is the main purpose.

deal with two of them. First, in every history of modern Arabic literature you will find the statement that the members of the Modern School were eager readers of European fiction and aspired to raise Egyptian literature on to what they conceived to be the global standard, and that they first read French and English authors, and later were influenced by Russian literature, the former appealing to their intellect, the latter to their heart (according to Yaḥyà Ḥaqqī, at least: Ḥaqqī 1975, 81; cf. also Hafez 1993, 217). There is however almost no study on the exact nature of this relationship, or ‘influence’.⁸ Second, the writers of this group lived in a world which had since long been exposed to processes of globalisation, not only in the field of literature, but in almost every other field as well. Nevertheless, nobody has yet tried to integrate this fact into the reading of the texts, which, when viewed from this perspective, may appear much less ‘local’ in their meaning than they have previously been held to be. They have been smiled at or even pitied as unable to deal with problems of a more general human significance – an accusation that should have been dismissed even earlier on, given at least *some* statements by authors themselves, among them Lāshīn, who tell us that only the setting and the characters of their stories had to be ‘typically Egyptian’, but the problems they dealt with were always universally human.⁹

In order to make my points, I have deliberately chosen one of Lāshīn’s stories that seems to embody, at first sight, most of the alleged deficiencies of the writings of the Modern School and, because of its seemingly banal topic – it is “A Ghost Story” (*Qiṣṣat ‘ifrīt*) – could also be read as a confirmation of Orientalist prejudices against Arabs (as though nothing had changed since E. W. Lane and his description of the *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, written during the years 1833–1835, the tenth chapter of which opens with the words “The Arabs are a very superstitious people, and none of them are more so than those of Egypt”, Lane [1896] 1986, 231)¹⁰ as well as against much of modern Arabic literature in general. This latter prejudice, that of triviality, Western Arabists, in their privileged role as mediators between cultures, should always be prepared to counter with good arguments. I hope to have them in this article. As a side-effect, my study may then also serve as an Arabist’s contribution to the study of the ‘world literature of ghosts,’ i.e., ghost fiction in general.

8 Gamal’s “comparative study” of “The Sketches of Dickens and Maḥmūd Ṭāhir Lāshīn” (Gamal 1980) makes a first attempt to fill the gap but, to my knowledge, has remained the single step in this direction.

9 See below, p. 328.

10 Cf. also the fact that Otto Spies, for his 1949 German translation of a selection of Turkish and Egyptian short stories, chose the title *Das Geisterhaus* (The Haunted House) – quite an Orientalist choice!

14.1 The Story

Qiṣṣat 'ifrīt appeared in 1929 in Lāshīn's second collection, *Yuḥkà anna...* (It is told that...),¹¹ and was probably written a few years earlier, i.e., in the second half of the 1920s.

In an opening chapter (ch. i, pp. 159–160), an unnamed first-person narrator tells his readers that, as a rationalist, he had never believed in the existence of ghosts. But only so until recently, when his friend, a young civil servant named Dāwūd, told him a story which he finds difficult not to believe because Dāwūd is an “enlightened intellectual” (*muthaqqaf mustanīr*, 159), has a perfect intellect (*kāmil al-‘aql*) and is absolutely trustworthy – *ḥattā idhā mazaḥ fa-lā yaqūl illā ḥaqqa* “even when he’s joking he tells nothing but the truth” (160).

Now (ch. ii, pp. 160–165) comes Dāwūd’s story as told by himself. One day he is transferred from Cairo to a post in Luxor, Upper Egypt. There, he and his wife move into a house which turns out to be haunted. Their fellow occupant is an ‘ifrīt, or demon.¹² According to the locals, this ‘ifrīt, like others in the area, could be the ghost of an ancient Egyptian who had lost his life as a forced labourer when building one of the famous monuments of Egyptian antiquity.¹³

The couple have three encounters with this ghost, the first two of which seem to pass off quite harmlessly. On the first occasion, Dāwūd’s wife feels that she has been beaten at night, but there is nobody who could have done it. She thinks it’s been just a dream, but in the morning her arms clearly show bruises. There is, however, no plausible explanation, so they forget about it. A month later, at night again, the couple wake up at the sound of the steps of somebody coming up the stairs. They are frightened because this might be a thief, and thieves tend to be very brutal these days. But when Dāwūd eventually overcomes his fear and

11 I am using the 1964 edition (al-Maktaba al-‘Arabiyya, Cairo) where *Qiṣṣat 'ifrīt* figures on pages 157–169.

12 According to Chelhod 1970, *‘afārīt* (plural of *‘ifrīt*) appear in the Qur’ān (xxvii, 39) as a special group of *jinn* and represent “particularly powerful chthonian forces, formidable and cunning”; in al-Jāhīz’s classification, a *‘ifrīt* is “still more powerful” than a *shayṭān*, and even than a *mārid*.

13 Cf. Lane (1896) 1986, 236: “The ancient tombs of Egypt, and the dark recesses of the temples, are commonly believed [...] to be inhabited by ‘efreets. [...] Many Arabs ascribe the erection of the Pyramids, and all the most stupendous remains of antiquity in Egypt, to Gánn Ibn-Gánn and his servants, the ginn, conceiving it impossible that they could have been raised by human hands.” – Aḥmad Amīn, too, mentions the belief of “some Egyptian men and women” in houses inhabited (*maskūna*) by *jinn/‘afārīt*, esp. if a case of murder (*ḥādithat qatl*) had happened in them, cf. Amīn 1953, 142–143 (s.v. “jinn”).

searches the house he cannot find anybody – although the steps can still be heard, now moving down the stairs.¹⁴

(Ch. iii, pp. 165–167) Similar incidents recur within the next weeks, but Dāwūd and his wife stay in the house, getting used to this kind of minor disturbances by an *‘ifrit* that seems to be harmless. One day, however, Dāwūd comes home from office only to find his wife totally scared and severely injured. She tells him that a black man has attacked her with fire, hit her in the face, and, when she tried to protect herself with her arm, struck her arm. Upon hearing this story, a friend of Dāwūd offers to host the couple in *his* house until they have found a solution. They accept the invitation.

(Ch. iv, pp. 167–169) The same friend then calls for a Christian priest, who performs a certain ritual and obviously manages to exorcise the *‘ifrit*. The couple return to their house and live there without any disturbance for the rest of their time in Luxor.

Upon moving out, however (when Dāwūd is re-transferred to Cairo), his friend receives a violent kick in the leg when they are just carrying a tall, heavy chest over the threshold. The *‘ifrit* had obviously not been driven away completely but just locked into the chest! So, Dāwūd and his friend ask some passers-by to help them and eventually succeed in removing the chest from the house. Last sentence: *wa-taraknā tilka l-dār al-la‘īna tandub man shādahā wa-tan‘ī man banāhā* “so we left that damned house wail over the one who erected it and mourn for the one who built it”.

14.2 Reading the story as a piece of *adab qawmī*

In many respects, *Qiṣṣat ‘ifrit* is not untypical of the writings of the *Madrasa Ḥadītha* and it can be read in accordance with the categories which Egyptian ‘national literature’ provides for interpretation. Following the 1919 uprising, Egypt had been accorded independence in 1922 (formally, at least) and was now to take charge of her affairs herself, as an Egyptian nation, in the same way as was being successfully demonstrated by contemporary Turkey under Mustafa Kemal ‘Atatürk’. In order to build a better future it was necessary, however, to cure society of the diseases that stood in the way of progress. Intellectuals like Lāshīn identified a number of such diseases, e.g., alcoholism and gambling, the corruption and hypocrisy of religious leaders, the disparity between the sexes and arranged

¹⁴ Cf. Amīn 1953, 143: people “sometimes hear a scrooping (or sobbing, *anīn*), sometimes someone throws stones on the house, or similar things.”

marriages, the lack of education, superstition, etc.¹⁵ They saw themselves as their society's doctors and believed that literature could fulfil the function of a remedy. In order to do so successfully it had to be as authentic and realistic as possible, and this in turn should be reached by creating 'typically Egyptian' characters and dealing with 'typically Egyptian' problems.

There are of course many elements in Lāshīn's ghost story that the author probably intended to be 'typically Egyptian'. There is the world of the civil servants with their clothes, their habits, their psychological make-up;¹⁶ there is the 'authentic' Upper Egyptian world of Luxor, and also Ancient Egypt as represented in the ghost's alleged background;¹⁷ and there is of course the *'ifrit* himself, whom Lāshīn no doubt intended to be a 'typically Egyptian' element.¹⁸

But – is there a disease that society should be cured from? Sabry Hafez holds that the story aims at showing “the dramatic effect of superstition on family life” (Hafez 1993, 224). If that were true the story would be in line indeed with a num-

15 Cf., e.g., Wielandt 1983, *passim*, esp. 32–37, and chs. ii & iii; de Moor 1991, *passim*, esp. 2ème & 3ème partie; Hafez 1993, *passim*, esp. 182–185, 201–211, 219–227; Guth 2003b, esp. 377–384.

16 Having stated (in a chapter entitled “Narrative Survey of the Society”) that Lāshīn “endeavours to make ever larger areas of social reality accessible and comprehensible to the individual” and that the “people who matter in Lāshīn's world represent the whole spectrum of middle-class life”, Hafez mentions *Qīṣṣat 'ifrit* as an example of stories about civil servants who “spend a great deal of their time in pavement cafés, chatting over a cup of tea and a hubble-bubble pipe about their fears, interests, and superstitions” (Hafez 1993, 219–220).

17 Only a few years earlier, Howard Carter had discovered the tomb of Tut-‘Ankh-Amen (1922) and the Pharaoh's mummy had been opened (1925) (cf. Gumbrecht 1997, 149, s.v. “Mummies”), which led to a wave of Egyptomania spilling over not only into the West, but also back into Egypt, where it helped the Pharaonic version of Egyptian nationalism (which insisted on the ‘Pharaonic’, rather than Arab or Muslim, identity of the country's inhabitants) to gain momentum.

18 By letting the narrator of ch. i give the names of some ghosts in the existence of which he had formerly not believed – *al-mu'tazara* “she of the *izār* (i.e., with a ‘long wrapper, loin cloth (used particularly during the pilgrimage to Mecca’, Badawi/Hinds 1986, s.v.))”, and *dhū l-rijl al-maslūkha* “he of the flayed foot” –, the author creates a specifically local setting. I have not been able to trace *al-mu'tazara* in any of the reference works that I thought could be relevant (Wehr's, Lane's, and Badawi and Hinds' dictionaries; Lane's *Manners and Customs*, Aḥmad Amīn's *Qāmūs*; in his edition of Lāshīn's complete works, Ḥāfiẓ explains *al-mu'tazara* as “al-ashbāḥ wa-l-'afārīt”, cf. Lāshīn 1999, 296, fn. 2). As for *dhū l-rijl al-maslūkha*, Badawi and Hinds 1986 give (s.v. s-l-kh) “*ṭabu riḡli masluuxa* the bogey-man (a creature described as half man and half donkey and having flayed legs)”; the same description is given already by Amīn (1953, 17, s.v. “abū”); not commented upon by Ḥāfiẓ in Lāshīn 1999.

ber of other ghost stories of the same period – not only from Egypt and the Modern School, by the way,¹⁹ but also from Turkey²⁰ or Central Asia,²¹ for example. As Rotraud Wielandt has shown (in the case of Maḥmūd Taymūr), ghosts in these texts either become unmasked as deceitful human inventions or appear as mere delusions of a neurasthenic person, the belief in ghosts is always shown as superstitious and in most cases also harmful.²² By contrast, Lāshīn's 'ifrīt is neither shown to be a delusion nor does it throw the couple into a marital crisis, its apparition rather strengthens the marital bonds.

Another difference between Lāshīn's ghost narrative and those of other authors is that the 'ifrīt is not presented as something unreal here.²³ What is harmful is not the belief in ghosts, but the ghost himself!

19 Other Egyptian ghost narratives include, e.g., Maḥmūd Taymūr's *Rajab Efendī* (1927), *Ifrit Umm Khalīl* (1929), and *al-Shayṭān* (1930). These stories are summarized and commented on in Wielandt's inventory as nos. [35], [45], and [50], respectively.

20 Cf., e.g., *Perili Köşk* (The Haunted Villa, 1919) by Ömer Seyfettin (continuously reprinted, e.g. in *Seçme Hikâyeler*, ii, Istanbul 1992, 14–23; the text is also to be found on the internet, in Latin as well as in Ottoman characters); German translation by Otto Spies, in Spies 1949, 11–20.

21 Cf., e.g., *Aḥmad-i devband* (Ahmad the Exorcist, 1928) by the Tajik intellectual and leading representative of the reformist *jadīdī* movement, Şadruddin 'Aynī (1878–1954); English translation in 'Aynī (1928) 1998, 195–219.

22 Ghost narratives then are only a variant of Taymūr's "Lieblingsthema von der verheerenden Wirkung zwanghafter Ideen" (favourite theme, the destructive effect of obsessive ideas; Wielandt 1983, 369; cf. also *ibid.*, 56). Other stories falling into this category would be *al-Mahdī al-muntazar* (1923), *al-Shaykh Sayyid al-'abīṭ* (1926), and *al-Maḥkūm 'alayhi bi-l-i-dām* (1928) (Wielandt's inv. nos. [5], [26], [38]). (For another ghost story by Taymūr, *al-Hājj 'Alī* (1933) [74], see next footnote.) Lāshīn himself also contributed to this kind of stories, cf. e.g. his *al-Zā'ir al-ṣāmit* (The Silent Visitor, in *Yuhkā anna...*, 1929), where a case of "faith healing" (Hafez 1993, 224) is exposed. Superstition is depicted as something harmful to be overcome also later in his only novel, *Ḥawwā' bi-lā Ādam* (1934). – Şadruddin 'Aynī's *Aḥmad-i devband* (cf. previous note), which deals with the appearance of *devs*, *paris* and *jinn*s, concludes: "In one of the[.] scientific books, Ahmad read that one of the components of bone is a chemical substance called phosphorus, which at night – especially in warm weather – can appear like a flickering light. This 'phosphorescence' can occur whenever bones decompose. The lights that appear in graveyards, old mosques, dunghills and the like are a result of this, since such places are full of rotting bones. Ahmad [...] realized that the Will o' the wisp that had scared all his colleagues was nothing more than phosphorescence. – Once he had learned this from his reading, Ahmad was convinced that there were no such things as *devs*, *paris* and *jinn*. All the supernatural beings that people feared were either pure figments of the imagination or things that could be explained by physicists and chemists." 'Aynī (1928) 1998, 219.

23 A rare parallel in this respect is Maḥmūd Taymūr's *al-Hājj 'Alī* (1933) [Wielandt's inv. no. 74]. Wielandt qualifies this story as exceptional among the author's early works because it seems to

If, however, the story does *not* unmask the ghost as a harmful superstition, what then could have been its purpose according to the historians of ‘national literature’? Was it meant to be just an essay in ‘authentically Egyptian’ writing – in portraying Egyptian civil servants, for instance, their love of chatting and telling curious stories?²⁴ Local colour for its own sake, an end in itself? Or, as Hafez suggested, a parody that aims at exposing to public criticism the ‘boasting’ of civil servants with ‘heroic’ experiences?²⁵ Or an essay in the technique of story-telling?

There could, of course, be a bit of all this in *Qiṣṣat ‘ifrīt*. But, let us be honest – even if we acknowledged that Lāshīn has produced here a good and entertaining, ‘typically Egyptian’ story, this would not prevent an average Western reader (nor his/her Arab colleague who has internalised the Western standards) from smiling at it a bit condescendingly, because one cannot really take it as a piece of serious, high-quality literature, can one? Its pioneering quality notwithstanding, the reader would, with all probability, state that *Qiṣṣat ‘ifrīt* suffers from a lack of depth and, above all, of an extra-Egyptian significance, so that it can certainly not be regarded as being on a level with what was going on in the literary scene in the West at the same time. The story would never be read as a ‘modern’ text. Apart from scientific curiosity, the only motive to look at it could be, for a native reader, a kind of nostalgia (looking back into times when ‘we Egyptians’ still believed in ghosts) or, for a Westerner, exoticism (a story from an ‘oriental’ country where there are still ghosts, just as in *The Thousand and One Nights*).

have no other ‘purpose’ than to produce a good spine-chilling story (“allein um der Gruselwirkung willen”, 108; “Erzeugung des Gruselns als Selbstzweck”, 392), the author having given in, probably, to the temptation of writing something more popular in order to increase the number of his readers. Cf., however, fn. 52 below.

²⁴ Cf. Hafez’ view, quoted above, fn. 16.

²⁵ Hafez 1993, 220. Contrary to Hafez, I cannot read in this story anything that would suggest that Lāshīn had intended it as a parody. There is indeed some irony in the text; on several occasions the narrator shows himself amused at what his friend tells him, thus acting as a representative of enlightened rationalism, which is also the mental attitude expected to prevail on the readers’ part. But all ‘attacks’ of irony rebound here on the aggressor, and it is not the belief in ghosts which in the end is questioned but the sense of superiority which the rationalist ‘non-believers’ display.

14.3 Irritations

I am convinced, however, that this picture is, to say the least, defective and that Lāshīn, even in this ghost story, is not at all as superficial, banal, or ‘local’ as it might seem. Among the many reasons let me only mention the following:

1) It is quite unlikely that an author who constantly called for, and worked hard to, produce literature of a high quality²⁶ and for whom vulgarity was “a mortal sin” (Hafez 1993, 227), an author who in other stories of his also displayed a high consciousness of narrative technique and complexity²⁷ would have included in his collection as a shallow, insipid exception a story which was not up to his own standards, answering the majority of the reading public’s desire for entertainment.²⁸ (We may add that when he wrote *Qiṣṣat ‘ifrīt* he was already in his early thirties, so it may reasonably be assumed that he knew very well what he was doing.) And indeed, as, e.g., language is concerned, any reader will sense from the very beginning that Lāshīn displays great linguistic skills here, using a fine, elaborate, and at the same time very pleasant *fuṣḥā* which is exactly appropriate for the action (story-telling) and the story-tellers’ social background (civil servants / intellectuals). The same holds true for the style: its vividness and diversity (addresses to the reader, descriptions, reports, many dialogues) and, above all, a great feeling for suspense²⁹ make the story a good read from the beginning to the end.

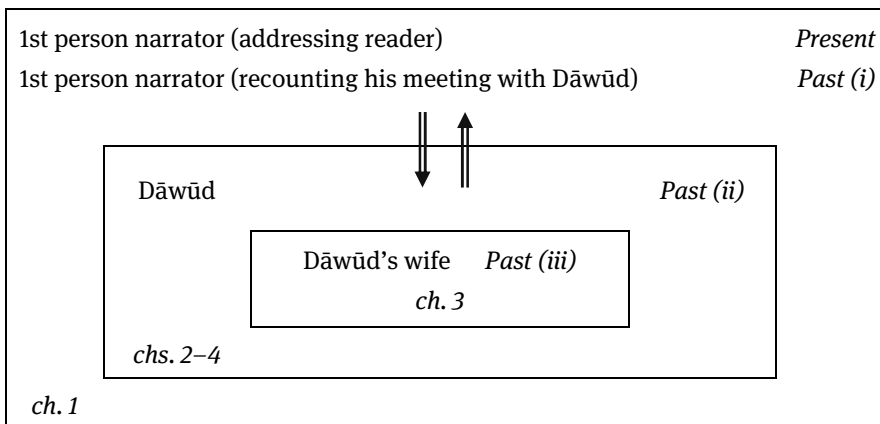
26 Hafez 1993, 218 reports, for instance, that Lāshīn “commenced writing short stories as early as 1921 or 1922, but he refrained from publishing any of his early attempts and continued to improve on them until late 1924”. He also underlines that Lāshīn is the least didactic among all Arab writers before the 1930s: “He tries to bring about reform not through exhortation, but through the provocative effect of his art” (ibid., 226).

27 Cf. Hafez 1993, 226: “strongest sense of structure”.

28 This is Hafez’s main explanation for what he considers as “superficiality” (*taṣṭīḥ*), technical “neglect” (*ihmāl*), and too much of melodrama (*ta‘miq fī l-milūdramiyya*) in a number of Lāshīn’s stories (*Qiṣṣat ‘ifrīt* not mentioned explicitly though). Cf. Ḥāfiẓ 1999, 38–39, and also 42–43, where Hafez follows Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī who, in his foreword to Lāshīn’s collection *Sukhriyyat al-nāy*, says that the writer occasionally makes use of lachrimosity (*naghmat al-ḥuzn wa-l-bukā’*) in order to captivate the reader with elements of “romanticism”, the way paved by al-Manfalūṭī and his likes.

29 Cf., for instance, the progression of the ghost encounters according to the well-known model of an escalation in three steps: forgotten incident → frightening incident → dangerous incident. Cf. also the insertion of ‘retardatory’ passages in several instances in order to increase suspense. For instance, the climax of the story seems to be reached when the ‘ifrīt has been exorcised successfully, but the story still continues, finding its pointed end, the ghost’s reappearance, only after the situation has been described as calm and secure.

2) As a matter of course, Lāshīn's "Ghost Story" contains elements of gothic novels or tales of terror: e.g., the mysterious sounds, the invisibility of the ghost, the descriptions of seemingly normal atmospheres which create an uncanny suspense; the beating, the fire, the blood, the exorcist ritual, etc. The story is however not of a simple "event-centered" or "action-focussed" type.³⁰ Despite its seemingly 'banal' and perhaps rather popular topic, an analysis of the narrative structure of *Qiṣṣat 'ifrīt* reveals that it is a rather complex text:



There are three narratives, one embedded in the other, and to these correspond four different time levels. In the opening chapter, the first-person narrator addressing his readers establishes a present tense layer (contemporaneity with the reader), then shifts back *ilā 'ahd ḡayr ba'īd*, to a "not distant past", the time of his meeting with Dāwūd and the latter's reporting his story [past (i)]; Dāwūd turns to an earlier past [past (ii)], starting his account – the central ghost story – with his transfer to Luxor "in the year 1920"; the first two encounters with the ghost are still told by Dāwūd (through the first narrator's mouth), while in order to report the 'ifrīt's attack on Dāwūd's wife – the crucial event which makes the couple leave the house – Lāshīn gives the floor to the victim herself: when Dāwūd returns home one day he learns what has happened during his absence [analepsis into the past (iii)] (the wife speaking through Dāwūd's mouth, and Dāwūd still through the first narrator's).

³⁰ These are two of the categories which Wielandt 1983 found useful to classify Maḥmūd Taymūr's stories.

A structural analysis also makes clear that it is not only Dāwūd's report about his encounters with the ghost that matters; at least as important as his story is the general question that is being discussed in the frame story on the basis of the ghost events, the question whether ghosts are real and, if so, how this would affect the enlightened rationalist identity of Dāwūd and the narrator. In addition to the introductory chapter where the focus is on exactly this question,³¹ Lāshīn lets Dāwūd's narrative become interrupted every now and then by his narrator's comments and their conversation that always revolve around the same problem.³² In this way the author adds at least three dimensions to his narrative – temporal, spatial, and topical ones; the time of the occult events becomes linked to the time of the two friends' conversation, Upper Egypt is looked at from a Cairene perspective, and Dāwūd's ghost story gains a meta-level on which his encounter with the mysterious is commented upon. The effect Lāshīn reaches by interlocking the two levels (cf. the arrows in the figure above) is that not only the representative of Rationalism questions the Believer in ghosts, but vice versa: the Believer in ghosts also challenges the Rationalist. The same relation is again doubled, although with reversed roles, on another level. When the narrator starts telling his story, he seems to have become convinced of the existence of *'afārīt*, his own former position of a non-believer now being assigned to the reader.³³

31 The story begins as follows: “– Have you ever seen an *'ifrīt*, dear reader? – No... – Did you ever have an experience with an *'ifrīt* without seeing it, dear reader? – No, no... – Do you believe in the existence of *'afārīt* at all, dear reader? – No, no, no... – Pardon, dear reader! You are, without doubt, *kāmil al-'aql* and *qawiyy al-nafs*. And I was like you until not long ago. Yes, I had refused, with all my bravour, to admit [the existence of] *al-mu'tazara*, and it had not occurred to my mind that I could fear from *dhū l-rijl al-maslūkha*, and I always thought that if he, or she, [...] would dare one day to appear in front of me, then I would smash his, or her, face in a way that would teach him, or her, an unforgettable lesson and prevent him, or her, from annoying anybody else. / However, my friend Dāwūd, a man approaching his forties who is *kāmil al-'aql* like you, well-educated (*muḥadhdhab*) and an enlightened intellectual (*muthaqqaf mustanīr*) [...], told me what happened to him with an *'ifrīt*, a real *'ifrīt* [...]" (159–160).

32 When, e.g., Dāwūd has just mentioned the bruises that were to be seen after the ghost's first 'visit', the first narrator interrupts his friend's account asking him: “And did you see these bruises with your own eyes (*bi-'aynay ra'sika*)?”, whereupon “my friend replied with absolute sincerity: – Yes, I saw these bruises. The ... the material [evidence] that cannot be doubted (*al-māddī alladhī lā shakk fih*) [...]" (161).

33 According to Ḥāfiz, addresses to the reader in Lāshīn's early narratives have no other function than to try not to lose them because at that time an author could still not count on the automatic attraction of the relatively new genre for an audience used to action-centred entertaining 'stuff'; from the artistic point of view, these addresses and the accompanying “justificational style” (*manhaj tabrīrī*) cannot be viewed as an element of modernism but are an inorganic “unjustified addition” (*tazayyud lā mubarrir lahū*) that make a rather artificial impression. Ḥāfiz

3) Like other believers in the idea of a ‘national literature’ (and also ‘national music’, and other arts) at that time, the Egyptian representatives of this global trend too were convinced that local colour was not an obstacle but the very key to success.³⁴ One of the conditions for becoming ‘modern’, and in this way reaching international standards – and this is what the call for the short story’s *‘aṣriyya* or *mu‘āṣara* (which accompanied that for Egyptianness, *miṣriyyat al-qīṣṣa*) really meant: ‘modernity, being up to date’ (cf. Ḥāfiẓ 1999: 33)³⁵ – one of these conditions was to become a nation, and a condition of becoming a nation was to have a national identity of one’s own – and vice versa: local specificity would ensure national identity, and being a nation meant to be modern, on a level with global norms. “If”, according to ‘Isā ‘Ubayd, one of the theoreticians of the Modern School, “we succeed” in portraying our own condition and write as authentically Egyptian as possible, “extracting” our observations “from the depth of our daily life”, “then we will have contributed something which Western writers ignore because they are incapable of studying our personality and the order of our lives”, and the result might be that, one day, Egyptian literature will even become translated into Western languages, i.e., will be accepted as the West’s equal.”³⁶

4) This leads me to the next point, another aspect of the fact that Egyptian literature of the 1920s was produced in contexts that were, to a large extent, ‘global’. The Middle East had by then already been closely integrated into global developments politically and economically, and in the spheres of cultural

1999, 37. Once the friendship with the reader is established, Lāshīn soon turns to an artistically more demanding style, in this way putting the friendship to the test quite heavily – *ibid.*, 42.

34 This idea remained especially popular, and still gained attractivity before and after World War I, on the margins of the former centres, e.g., in Scandinavia, in the Slavonic regions, or on the Balkans, where the arts had stood, until the first half of the nineteenth century, “in the shadow of the great *Kulturnationen*, the Italians, French, British, Germans” (Honolka 1979: 197) – cf., for instance, the music of the Finn Jean Sibelius, the Czechs Leoš Janáček and Josef Suk, the Hungarians Zoltán Kodály and Béla Bartók, or the Rumanian George Enescu who, in search of authenticity, continued earlier efforts to find a ‘national’ expression until quite late into the twentieth century, whereas in the center the idea had by then lost much of its earlier charm already.

35 To underline his being up to global standards, an author like Maḥmūd Taymūr even used to sign his stories with *Mūbāsān al-miṣrī* “the Egyptian Maupassant”, cf. *ibid.*, 35.

36 *yajīb an tushād [riwāyātunā] ‘alā asās al-mulāḥaẓa al-ṣādiqa al-mustakhraja min a‘māq ḥayātīnā al-yawmiyya wa-‘alā l-taḥlīlāt al-ijtimā‘iyya wa-l-naḥsiyya, fa-naḥnu idhā ḥaqqaqnā dhālika la-ataynā bi-shay’ jadīd yajhaluhū kuttāb al-gharb li-‘ajzihim ‘an dars nafiyyatīnā wa-niẓām ḥayātīnā*: ‘Isā ‘Ubayd, preface to *Iḥsān Hānim*, 1921, *mīm* [= xiii]. [For a translation of the complete foreword, which is generally considered a kind of manifesto of the Modern School, cf. above, Chapter 13.]

achievement and civilisation, too, Cairo was hardly lagging behind Paris or London. One only needs to consider contemporary urban architecture, the parks, the hotels and theatres then built, modern means of transport and communication, styles of dress, the rich variety of newspapers, or objects in use in everyday life like, in Lāshīn's story, the American-style lamp (*fānūs min al-ṭirāz al-amrikānī*) which Dāwūd takes into his left hand when he sets out to search for the supposed 'thief' and of which he says that "it has become a custom to leave it burning in the *ṣāla* the whole night."³⁷

As a result, the writers of the New School not only read French, English and Russian literature, but also discussed world politics, followed the scientific and philosophical debates that were going on worldwide, and so on.

How can these aspects add to the understanding of Lāshīn's "Ghost Story"?

14.4 Qisṣat 'ifrīt echoing global discourses

The acknowledgement of technical maturity and the discovery of a surprisingly high structural complexity may make us put Orientalist prejudices aside and allow Lāshīn's *Qisṣat 'ifrīt* to be studied in the genre context of ghost fiction in general. One can try to delineate congruencies and points of difference with texts from non-Egyptian literary traditions and assign Lāshīn's story its place vis-à-vis the bulk of gothic novels, tales of terror, and other ghost fiction from other national literatures. Since we know high quality examples of ghost fiction from our own literary tradition,³⁸ it will also be easier then to allow for the possibility of some depth in this story despite its 'oriental' and specifically Egyptian appear-

³⁷ *jarat-i l-ʿāda an yutrak fī l-ṣāla muḍāʿam ṭūl al-layl*, 162.

³⁸ The history of ghost fiction is usually said to begin in England with Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764) and its successors, especially Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolfo* (1794), M. G. Lewis' *Ambrosio, or the Monk* (1796), or Mary W. Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). It was continued, and modified, by writers like Edgar Allen Poe, Guy de Maupassant, Henry James, and even Oscar Wilde (*The Canterville Ghost*, 1887), or in Russia by Gogol' and Turgenev (see, e.g., Wilpert 1979, s.v. "Gespenstergeschichte"). Given the fact that much of this literature had been translated into Arabic during the nineteenth and early twentieth century and that the Egyptian Modernists were eager readers of Western authors, it is highly probable that Lāshīn knew many of these Western ghost stories. For Maḥmūd Taymūr, Wielandt mentions the influence of Maupassant's *contes phantastiques* (Wielandt 1983, 55 sq.). It cannot be excluded, then, that the Modernists who wrote ghost stories also wanted to contribute to what they conceived of as a 'global ghost/gothic fiction'; at least, they certainly knew the norms which they had to write up to in order to reach internationally recognized quality.

ance, despite its local colour and, above all, despite its seemingly ridiculous, trivial topic. One could perhaps try to read it as a parable of the situation of contemporary Egypt, a few years after the “brutal destruction of Egypt’s aspirations during the 1919 revolution” when a feeling of “deep suffering and humiliation” had prevailed (Hafez 1993, 221), and after (formal) independence: for instance, a ‘house’ [Egypt] newly built [new constitution etc.] but haunted by a ‘ghost from the past’ [the heritage of the ‘Age of Decadence’, *‘aṣr al-inḥitāt*] with which the intellectuals/civil servants have to cope and that is difficult to get rid of.³⁹ In such a reading (with which we would still not leave a purely Egyptian, local frame of reference), the characterisation of the ‘house’ as *ḥadīth al-‘ahd*, [...] *ḥasan al-tansīq, mustakmal shurūṭ al-rāḥa wa-l-ṣiḥḥa* (“newly built, well-designed, and perfectly equipped with all means of comfort and hygiene”, 169) would surely have to be interpreted, as would the dates given by Lāshīn, for the story to be made sense of.⁴⁰ To all my knowledge, the works of the Modern School have never been read in this way yet, since the categories provided for interpretation so far, esp. ‘realism’, seemed to exclude a metaphorical reading from the very beginning – although a high metaphorical potential has been observed in some narratives.⁴¹ It would be promising to go into detail here, but this would produce a study in its own right, and I prefer to follow another track.

The text’s technical maturity and structural complexity are equally apt to convince us to direct our attention to the layer that is skillfully (and quite ‘obstinately’) interwoven with the ghost story. Thus, it may be more fruitful to concentrate on the questions the text *itself* raises, such as the existence of ghosts and the challenge posed to enlightened rationalism by a ‘parallel reality’. These questions touch upon universal issues that align with the Modernists’ goal of achieving global standards through national specificity. The Modernists believed that a literary work could only possess lasting value if it grappled with the “eternal aspects of the human condition”.⁴² To establish the plausibility of these issues being

39 I am indebted for this idea to a student of mine, Hans Furrer (Bern). Thank you, Hans!

40 Why, for instance, are Dāwūd and his wife said to have moved into the house “in 1920”? Why should the house have been built “in 1914”? And why does it house the local Sharī‘a Court (*al-Maḥkama al-Shar‘iyya*) “though it had been used [in this function] [...] from morning until mid-day only” (p. 160)?

41 Just think of the prayer place (*al-muṣallā*) in Lāshīn’s *Ḥadīth al-qarya* (1929), or the train in Muḥammad Taymūr’s equally famous *Fī l-qīṭār* (1917).

42 *wa-l-riwāya lā takūn khālida illā idhā kuwwinat min al-‘anāṣir al-insāniyya al-khālida*, as ‘Isā ‘Ubayd had it in the preface to *Iḥsān Hānim*: ‘Ubayd (1921) 1964, *yā’* [= x] [see above, end of Chapter 13].

significant, it would be beneficial to locate the themes of the story within contemporary discourses outside of Egypt that can be characterised as global and inherently modern. Given Egypt's integration into global processes during that time, it is probable that these discourses formed a part of Egyptian authors' life-worlds. In essence, if literature serves as a reflection of an author's life-world, and if we assume that the happenings of the 1920s around the world formed an indispensable part of an Egyptian author's life-world, then it is possible to utilize the categories discovered by historical research for the 1920s outside of Egypt and reevaluate contemporary Egyptian texts to determine if these global categories can also be applied to them.

In order to do this I have consulted the seminal study *In 1926: Living at the Edge of Time* (1997) by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, professor of Comparative Literature at Stanford University, California. In what he calls “an essay on historical simultaneity” (Gumbrecht 1997, 433),⁴³ the author arranges “the most frequently observed phenomena and configurations in the year 1926 [...] into three categories”, which he calls *dispositifs* (or *arrays*), *binary codes* and *collapsed codes* (ibid., 434). *Dispositifs*, for him, are ways in which “artifacts, roles, and activities influence bodies”, because these “artifacts, roles, and activities (for example, Airplanes, Engineers, Dancing) [...] require the human bodies to enter into specific spatial and functional relations to the everyday-worlds they inhabit” (ibid.). Clusters of *arrays*, or *dispositifs*, coexist and overlap in a space of simultaneity and “tend to generate discourses which transform [their] confusion into [...] alternative options”, such as Individuality vs. Collectivity, or Authenticity vs. Artificiality. Since these *binary codes* “provide principles of order within the unstructured simultaneity of everyday-worlds, one might”, according to Gumbrecht, “reserve the concept of ‘culture’ for the ensemble of such codes” (ibid.). When the codes lose their de-paradoxifying function, Gumbrecht calls them *collapsed codes*. Collapsed codes, he says, “are particularly visible because, as areas of malfunction and entropy, they attract specific discursive attention and, often, specific emotional energy” (ibid.). *Dispositifs* (arrays), codes, and collapsed codes are connected to each other “via myriad labyrinthine paths of contiguity, association, and implication”, altogether to be seen as “an asymmetrical network, as a rhizome rather than as a totality” (ibid., 435).

⁴³ The main purpose of the book is to allow the reader to jump right into the ‘world of 1926’ which, like any other world of a synchronous section, was a complex system of correspondences, oppositions, concepts, ... It is an attempt to write history again after the proclaimed ‘end of history’, not by writing *about* the past, however, but by making it more or less accessible to *direct* experience in providing as much concrete material as possible, and letting it ‘speak itself’.

Among the many *dispositifs* which Gumbrecht identifies as characteristic of the world of 1926 we find, e.g.,

artifacts like	airplanes, assembly lines, automobiles, elevators, gramophones, movie palaces, mummies, ocean liners, railroads, telephones, trains
and roles like	employees, engineers, hunger artists, or reporters. ⁴⁴

Among the *codes* there are

Action vs. Impotence	Authenticity vs. Artificiality
Center vs. Periphery	Individuality vs. Collectivity
Male vs. Female	Present vs. Past
Sobriety vs. Exuberance	Uncertainty vs. Reality

and *collapsed codes* include

Action = Impotence (Tragedy)
Authenticity = Artificiality (Life)
Individuality = Collectivity (Leader)

These categories are, of course, drawn from *Western* (though not exclusively European) environments and discourses, as Gumbrecht explicitly concedes (sources in German, English and Spanish, also covering the two Americas). But we shall see now that surely not all, but at least some of them may be appropriate to describe also the Egyptian world of the mid-1920s, and because Lāshīn's "Ghost Story", as one of a myriad of other elements, forms part of this historical reality, it will be possible to identify them in this narrative, too.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *In 1926* is written as an 'encyclopedia' with entries in alphabetical order. You may start reading wherever you like. In every entry you will find references to other related entries, and in these again references to still other entries. So, after having 'entered 1926' through one door you will soon start moving around in this world in an associative manner, exploring one phenomenon after the other.

⁴⁵ If *Qiṣṣat 'ifrīt* was written shortly after 1926 this would surely not matter too much, since the *dispositifs*, binary codes and collapsed codes did not cease to be categories of ordering the everyday-worlds abruptly when that year ended. It is permissible, therefore, methodologically, to

To begin with, *Qışşat 'ifrīt* is without a doubt a story about *employees (civil servants, see below), and it may also be read as an *engineers' story.⁴⁶ Not only because its author was himself an engineer by profession (he had studied at the *muhandishkhāna*, the Technical College, in Cairo, obtained a diploma in 1917 and a year later entered the Public Works Department, *tanzīm* (cf. Brugman 1984, 252), of which he later became chief, but also because it is a story about a certain kind of engineers. Civil servants like Dāwūd and the narrator conceived of themselves, as Lāshīn and other intellectuals of the emergent Egyptian middle classes did, as 'social engineers' or 'social technicians', they "viewed 'society' itself as an abstract entity, determined by universal, scientific laws and principles of organization (*al-hay'a al-ijtimā'iyya*)" (Selim 2004, 6–7).⁴⁷ This is also evident from the metaphore of the 'doctors' who felt themselves obliged, and able, to cure the diseases of their society (i.e., the 'body', *al-hay'a*). The role of the social engineer had of course been inherited, in the Middle East, from nineteenth and early twentieth century reformism (*tanzīmāt*, *islāh*, etc.), and found exemplary representatives in reformists like, e.g., Atatürk, the 'architect' (another technical metaphor) of modern Turkey; the role was however not at all restricted to Middle Easterners, cf. for instance *the* social reformer, and revolutionary, of early twentieth century, Vladimir Il'yich Lenin.

Prior to their confrontation with the 'ifrīt, the attitudes of the two friends in the story can be described with terms like rationalism, matter-of-factness, or *sobriety.⁴⁸ These terms, however, are also categories with which Gumbrecht's engineers order their everyday-world.⁴⁹

Underlying the fascination with rationalism, matter-of-factness, sobriety is the "constant search for norms and models that would make it possible to assess

extend Gumbrecht's "essay on historical simultaneity" to Lāshīn's story even if there may be no absolute simultaneity.

46 In the following, I will mark with an asterisk (*) Gumbrechtian terms that figure in the above list of categories.

47 Cf. Timothy Mitchell who "argues that the diagnosis and reform of this abstract social order – 'conceived in absolute distinction to the mere individuals and practices composing it' – was the principal object of nationalist reformers across the political and social spectrum"; Mitchell 1991, 127, quoted in Selim 2004, 7. – For 'social engineering', see Gumbrecht 1997, 97.

48 Cf. the qualities which the narrator in the opening section presupposes in his readers and which had characterized Dāwūd and himself prior to the ghost experience: "enlightened intellectual" (*muthaqqaf mustanir*, 159), endowed with a "firm/stable character" (*qawiyy al-nafs*, 160) and "perfect reasoning power" (*kāmil al-'aql*, *ibid.*) that is used to look for "material evidence" (*athar māddī*, 161) only. – Cf. Gumbrecht 1997, 95: "The engineer relies on 'facts,' not on vague 'convictions.'"

49 Cf. Gumbrecht 1997, 93–101 ("Engineers"), 329–335 ("Sobriety vs. Exuberance"), 336–348 ("Uncertainty vs. Reality").

and shape reality” (Gumbrecht 1997, 329), i.e., especially man’s surroundings. The very foundations of the world-view of Gumbrecht’s engineers had, however, begun already to show cracks in several places. Einstein’s theory of relativity had severely shaken the scientific belief of all these teachers, architects, technicians, and also ‘social engineers’ in the one and only *reality and aroused in them a feeling of *uncertainty about which version of *reality was true (although the theory of relativity, too, could of course be relied upon and calculated with as a law of nature). Following World War I, the cataclysmic key experience which had shown “the power with which modern weaponry (could) transform nature and landscape” (ibid., 338), there was also a general feeling of instability, the world was being experienced as chaotic, the metaphor of the world as an ‘unstable ground’ had become a widely accepted commonplace (ibid., 337)⁵⁰ (and chaos should be warded off through order, norms, laws and so on – this is how sobriety and uncertainty are interconnected). As a result of this *uncertainty, the belief in the effectiveness of *action, so fundamental for *engineers, the trust in their own capacity to bring about change, were shaken as well, they had to acknowledge “the limitations that facticity and fate impose[d] on the human will” (ibid., 355) and a feeling of *impotence became widespread.

All the phenomena just mentioned are to be found in Lāshīn’s *Qışṣat ‘ifrīt* as well. Here, too, the *engineers’ fundamental convictions and attitudes are at stake: the apparition of the ghost has shaken Dāwūd’s worldview, as well as parts of his personality,⁵¹ and through his friend’s story the narrator has likewise been forced to give up his former superior rationalism and allow for a possible other *reality that may exist parallel to the reality he knows⁵² – the same one and only

50 The motif of the loss of stable ground returns in the then extremely popular ‘train’ metaphor: man moves around very fast and without direct contact with the ground (cf. ibid. 340; cf. also ch. “Railroads”). It may also be a reason for the preference for shorter literary genres over longer ones, the former single reality “breaking apart into an infinite number of everyday worlds, each of which (had) to be discovered, occupied, and cultivated” (ibid. 344).

51 While telling his story, Dāwūd is described by his friend as one who, “to be frank, at times I had the impression [...] was close to mutating into an ‘ifrīt, or that the ‘ifrīt himself was telling a part of his life-story through Dāwūd’s mouth” (*bi-ṣarāḥa aqūl: innī kunt fī laḥaẓāt atakhayyal anna Dāwūd awshak an yartadd ‘ifrīt^{am}, aw anna l-‘ifrīt dhātahū yarwī juz^{am} min tārikh ḥayātih ‘alā lisān Dāwūd*, 160).

52 Interestingly enough, Maḥmūd Taymūr’s *al-Ḥājj ‘Alī* (1933; cf. fn. 23 above) parallels Lāshīn’s *Qışṣat ‘ifrīt* in this respect. As Wielandt has it: “[d]ie in dieser Spukgeschichte errichtete Wirklichkeit wird vom Autor als Teil der objektiven Realität behandelt und durch nichts in Zweifel gezogen” [Reality as constructed in this spook story is treated by the author as part of objective reality and not called into question at all] – Wielandt 1983, 108. The discovery and acceptance of

reality, by the way, which the authors of the nineteenth and early twentieth century were convinced they were able to truly represent in their writings –, and this has thrown him (like obviously Lāshīn himself) into a deep *uncertainty.⁵³ In including the report of the Christian priest's exorcist ritual and showing these countermeasures to be – in the end, at least – ineffective, the author also clearly makes the *'action vs. impotence' dichotomy a topic of his text. The juxtaposition of *action and *impotence may also be responsible for Lāshīn's choice of civil servants as the protagonists of his ghost story. As civil servants, Dāwūd and his friend can be characterised not only as *engineers, but also as *employees, for whom Gumbrecht observed a general fascination in 1926 in the discourses he analyzed. What he says about *employees in the West may easily apply to the heroes of *Qışşat 'ifrīt*, too: The

strong fascination – if not [...] obsession – with the concept of the employee [...] probably results from a number of ambiguities in the employee's role. On the one hand, employees are allowed to occupy a position of agency [...; related of course to *action – S.G.]. On the other hand, employees are denied (or deny themselves) agency [...]

(Gumbrecht 1997, 81)

And is the story – apart from its 'fatalistic' end which is a confession of *impotence – not also a kind of denial of agency, as though the 'engineers' were not really the masters of their own deeds but only re-acting to the 'ifrīt's actions?

In the same way as the *reality/uncertainty and *action/impotence dichotomies observed by Gumbrecht for the West obviously are on Lāshīn's agenda, too, so are some of the reactions to these dichotomies. Arthur Schnitzler's famous *Traumnovelle* (Dream Story), for instance (the story which inspired Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*, by the way), which deals with the *reality/uncertainty problem, ends with "a tacit acknowledgment of the multiple nature of everyday reality", and this acknowledgement "has become part of daily life" everywhere "long before professional philosophers get used to an epistemological situation in which the truth-criterion is disintegrating" (ibid., 344). The solution Lāshīn offers for the same epistemological problem is very similar to Schnitzler's: the verifiability of Dāwūd's story notwithstanding, the narrator accepts the individual

parallel realities, all self-contained and of their own right, was of course also fostered by Freudian psychoanalysis. As a result, the œuvre of many authors, Western and Eastern alike, shows a 'psychological turn'. Wielandt has demonstrated this very convincingly for Maḥmūd Taymūr, with whom the shift took place in 1927, cf. Wielandt 1983, 52sq., 56, 93. [Cf. also above, Chapter 13.1.5, on Maḥmūd Taymūr.]

53 Dāwūd advises his friend to take the story seriously and as something to think about (*mawḍū' tafkīr*, p. 165), and so does the narrator with the reader.

reality and truth of his friend's account. Had he still been a typical 'engineer' he would have tried to falsify it or integrate it into his own *one* *reality (he tries to, time and again, during his conversation with Dāwūd,⁵⁴ but in the end remains silent... and then retells Dāwūd's story to a larger reading public).

Other voices which Gumbrecht lets speak in his book blame the modern world's *artificiality for the overall deplorable situation during the inter-war period,⁵⁵ as for example Fritz Lang in his film *Metropolis*, where chaos and the loss of stable ground appear as a product of modern man's shaping his own world (cf. Gumbrecht 1997: 264–5).⁵⁶ As a means to counter this artificiality (for which, by the way, the 'engineers' in particular are responsible), many start looking for 'the *authentic' – and find it, e.g., in the *past (e.g., ancient civilisations), in the mountains (cf. *mountaineering), or in nature in general (e.g. the popular *Wandervogel* movement in Germany). It is true that in Egypt, the 'artificiality/authenticity' problem could look quite different from that in Europe. Especially the experience of colonialism was felt to bring in inauthentic ideas and ways of life the artificiality of which had to be countered by strong effort to preserve or restore one's true identity. But al-Manfalūṭi's lachrymosity or the studied sentimentalism of European-style light fiction were also identified as something artificial, and the Modern School held up against these 'deviations' their 'realistic' fiction with 'authentic Egyptian' characters and themes.⁵⁷ I would also not want to exclude the possibility that Lāshīn's ghost story was meant to be 'authentic' not only thanks to the Egyptianness of its characters (the *'ifrit* included); it can certainly be read

54 In one instance, he "could not but smile" (*lam atamālak an ibtasamt*, 165); in another he asks him, "in astonishment and anger: 'What's that nonsense, Dāwūd!' (*qult fi dahsha wa-ghaḍab: mā hādḥā l-hawas, yā Dāwūd?*, 166), etc.

55 It is of course the age of important technical achievements that changed modern man's relationship with his environment and made life less natural, less authentic, and more artificial, cf. Gumbrecht's entries on Airplanes, Assembly Lines, Automobiles, Elevators, Gramophones, Movie Palaces, Ocean Liners, Railroads, Roof Gardens, Telephones, and Wireless Communication. As a matter of fact, most, if not all, of these achievements formed part of contemporary Egyptian everyday worlds as well.

56 After the major upheaval of World War I, the human subject lost its former central position because it experienced powers that man had created and set free, but that had become uncontrollable and were now striking back at himself – Falk 1984, 33.

57 The animosity between al-Manfalūṭi and the Modern School of course also echoes the *exuberance/*sobriety opposition noticed by Gumbrecht for the Western contexts where much of the art and literature of the late nineteenth / early twentieth century came to be looked upon as "exuberance, proliferation, and eclecticism", and artistic historicism emerged as "the epitome of poor taste" (1997, 332).

likewise as a story about the confrontation of the 'artificial' urban rationalist 'engineer' with the 'authentic', though uncontrollable, powers of the underworld, an encounter which Lāshīn situates – certainly not without purpose – in the non-urban, almost rural, more 'natural' (i.e., more authentic) south of the country (*center vs. periphery). It may also not be chance that he creates in his text a link between the ghost and the civilisation of the Ancient Egyptians, in this way establishing a tension of *present vs. past. And I think it is also no accident that in several places in the text expressions point to the fact that our 'engineer', in spite of his fear, or perhaps also because of it, is fascinated by this earthy power and feels attracted to it, just as Gumbrecht's 1926 Westerners were fascinated by *mummies.

Last but not least, in the same way as the men of action in the West tend to experience their own impotence as something *tragic,⁵⁸ so Lāshīn too seems to conceive of his hero's impotence vis-à-vis the ghost as something fatal; this explains very well the sense of irony that prevails in the narrator's comments – the irony of an 'engineer' who has become helpless (cf. collapsed code *"Action = Impotence (Tragedy)").⁵⁹ The disintegration of the 'action vs. impotence' code is perhaps not yet complete here, so that this story actually only *borders* on tragedy. But a look at later developments in Lāshīn's writing, where the sense of tragedy has fully broken through, could support a reading of *Qiṣṣat 'ifrīt* as a first step in this direction. Only five years after the publication of *Qiṣṣat 'ifrīt* in *Yuhkà anna...*, we come across another representative of the civil servant / employee / (social) engineer type, the teacher Ḥawwā' in Lāshīn's novel "Eve without Adam" (*Ḥawwā' bi-lā Ādam*, 1934).⁶⁰ It is true that, in contrast to *Qiṣṣat 'ifrīt*, the reality of ghosts (in which Ḥawwā's grandmother believes) is denied throughout the whole story and the rationalist attitude towards any kind of superstition maintained till the very end. Nevertheless, the project of modernisation (for which the heroine's emancipation stands) is deplored as having tragically failed (for the moment, at least).⁶¹ The path of education by which the young orphan Ḥawwā'

58 Gumbrecht even assesses an 'addiction' to the "concept of Tragedy" at that time (1997, 353).

59 Cf. Hafez's observation that the "fatalism" which Lāshīn often introduces into his stories is a means to underline what the author perceives as the "irony of life" (1993, 224, 225).

60 Cf. fn. 5 above.

61 Lāshīn's novel does of course not stand out as an isolated case here but can be taken exemplary for a whole trend, in Egypt as in other countries of the Middle East, represented also by novels such as Yakup Kadri (Karaosmanoğlu)'s *Yaban* (The Stranger, 1932), Halide Edip (Adıvar)'s *Sinekli Bakkal* (Sinekli Bakkal Alley, 1935), Şādeq Hedāyat's *Būf-e kūr* (The Blind Owl, 1936), Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm's *Yawmiyyāt nā'ib fi l-aryāf* (The Diary of a Deputy Public Prosecutor in

manages to overcome the obstacles of her social background and to become a modern emancipated woman who is even able to live on her own, is not refuted as basically wrong but it is shown to be something *artificial in that it has forced the protagonist to neglect her emotional needs (her true, *authentic self, as the text suggests) until it has become 'too late': when she falls in love with Ramzī, the son of a wealthy pasha, the man does not even notice her burning with love for him, because as a girl of low social descent she has no place among the possible brides. In the end, she commits suicide. If *Qiṣṣat 'ifrīt* is a *mawḍū' tafkīr*, then *Ḥawwā' bi-lā Ādam* clearly is a *mawḍū' bukā'* – we can say, a tragedy. Before the suicide, however, and in addition to it, Ḥawwā's defeat is symbolized by her allowing her grandmother (and her helper, the old vendor of charms, al-Ḥājī Imām), the representatives of a traditional, 'pre-modern' Egypt, to perform an exorcist ritual on her: not a ghost, but the believers in ghosts emerge victorious! It is clear that for this novel, like for *Qiṣṣat 'ifrīt*, many of the Gumbrechtian codes are meaningful, such as *action vs. impotence (cf., e.g., Ḥawwā's working against superstition as a teacher vs. her failure to abolish it in her own environment, or the whole project of education, emancipation and social career vs. her impotence in the face of the persistence of the old social order), *authenticity vs. artificiality (see above), *individuality vs. collectivity (one of the central themes of contemporary Arabic literature in general, and represented here of course in Ḥawwā's, the individual's, clash with society's out-dated norms), *present vs. past (the heroine, modernity, progress vs. the grandmother, old traditions, backwardness), *sobriety vs. exuberance (Ḥawwā's rationality vs. her emotions, or the sober project of the society's modernisation vs. the exuberant sentimentalism at the novel's end), *reality vs. uncertainty (the author's and his heroine's former belief in a social reality that could be cured vs. insight into the complexity and manifoldness of this reality, deep uncertainty about which way to follow now, after the defeat). Ḥawwā' also participates in the ambiguity, mentioned above, of roles attributed to employees, oscillating between agency and a denial of agency. The escalation that has taken place between *Qiṣṣat 'ifrīt* and *Ḥawwā' bi-lā Ādam* with regard to the engineers'/reformers' disenchantment, or even disillusionment, with their former ideals becomes manifest in Lāshīn's narrative in a change of the gender of his protagonists. As Gumbrecht notes, "[i]n view of the most widespread gender stereotypes [of that time], it is not surprising that the role of

the Countryside, 1937, transl. into English as *The Maze of Justice*, 1947), or Sabahattin Ali's *Kuyucaklı Yusuf* (Yusuf from Kuyucak, 1937). For details of this trend/period, described from a comparative, 'Arabo-Turkish' perspective, cf. §§ 94, 99–101 (with all sub-§§) of my *Brückenschläge* (Guth 2003b).

the employee carries a strong connotation of femininity” (Gumbrecht 1997, 81), and as we can see here, for Lāshīn the weakness and non-agency of the ‘engineers’ must obviously have reached such a degree that the choice of a female protagonist suggested itself.⁶²

14.5 Conclusion

I think I have given enough examples now of congruences between Lāshīn’s *Ghost Story* and what Gumbrecht has found to be worldwide categories of perception and ordering everyday-worlds during the second half of the 1920s. And I hope that it has become clear that in the light of a possible global dimension in the author’s thinking – which, in my opinion, is more than probable – a story that looks rather banal and superficial from the point of view of ‘national literature’ may appear as something rather different: it has acquired an almost philosophical depth now, and it expresses, though in an Egyptian garment, a problem that has absolutely nothing ‘exotic’ or specifically ‘oriental’ about it but was an epistemological dilemma dealt with in the West too. Therefore, in this respect, a ‘lagging behind’, or backwardness, of Egyptian literature should be out of the question.⁶³ Despite its topic and local colour, the “Ghost Story” can be read as an

⁶² For another male author who chose a female protagonist as his fictional ‘alter ego’, cf. my “Male Author, Female Protagonist: Aspects of literary representation in Reşat Nuri Güntekin’s *Çalığışu*” (Guth 2008 = Chapter 15, below).

⁶³ Another method to prove the story’s contemporaneity with European thinking could have been Falk’s “componential analysis”. The main message of *Qişşat ifrīt* can be described as the interaction of three components: 1 – the belief of the ‘engineers’ in the superiority of human reason and its ability to master nature and defeat chaos; 2 – the elementary forces of nature, the powers of the supernatural and the hereafter; 3 – acknowledgement of the limitedness of the powers of human reason. The story metaphorically re-enacts the clash between (1) and (2) in a number of ‘fights’ between the *ifrīt* and the married couple, resulting in (3), an attitude of modest acceptance of other, ‘higher’, realities. With this trinary structure Lāshīn’s story expresses exactly the same general experience, described by Falk, at the end of *Neuzeit* that was sparked off by World War I: “Im Umbruchereignis selbst [i.e., the War, S.G.] [...] verlor das menschliche Subjekt seine zentrale Position, indem vom Menschen entbundene Kräfte erfahren wurden, die sich der menschlichen Kontrolle entzogen” (Falk 1984, 33; note that the ghost too is a “vom Menschen entbundene” *Kraft*, since the author relates his existence to the building of ancient monuments – a human activity), “das noch tätige schöpferische Ich [erlebte] das Ende der Möglichkeit zu ungebundener Entfaltung”, and “die der schöpferischen Tätigkeit des Ich vorausliegende strukturelle Verfassung der Welt [wurde] zur leitenden Grunderfahrung” (Falk 1983, 166). The failure of man (until then conceived of as nature’s master, i.e., as ‘engineer’) is no longer interpreted as an individual shortcoming from now on, but as the result of being subject to universal

absolutely modern text, and the *Madrasa Ḥadītha* can be seen on a level with, e.g., the Bauhaus architects, or a composer like George Enescu, whose third sonata for violin and piano (op. 25, again 1926) is explicitly intended to be played “dans le caractère populaire roumain”, i.e., with a lot of local colour – yet nobody will ever doubt its modernity and universality. Breaking down the traditional discourse of ‘national literature’ and building bridges between cultures will always be worth the effort.

forces, inherent in the structures of the world itself. Gumbrecht observes the very same phenomenon in Theodor Lessing’s description, in 1926, of “the efforts of an ostrich to fly” as something ‘tragic’, since the animal’s failure “can certainly not be interpreted as an individual shortcoming” (1997, 353).

15 Aspects of literary representation in Reşat Nuri Güntekin's *Çalığışu*

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This chapter: As an essay on a *Turkish* novel, this chapter could equally have been placed in Part VII on “Turkish parallels”. Close similarity to the texts discussed in the current section, however, together with its dealing with the question of gender and literary representation, made me go for its arrangement along with the documents of “The Nahḍa at its zenith”. Written and published at about the same time when the Modern School in Egypt formed and ‘Isā ‘Ubayd wrote and published his programmatic foreword to *Iḥsān Hānīm* (see above, Chapter 12), Reşat Nuri Güntekin’s *Çalığışu* (“The Wren”) could easily pass as an exemplary ‘translation’ of ‘Ubayd’s call for an authentic “national literature”, and the novel’s overall character of an optimistic success story reflects very closely the early nation-builders’ ‘Yes, we can!’ enthusiasm as it spoke from ‘Ubayd’s *muqaddima* or the works of the young Taymūr (cf. Chapter 13) and clearly is an extension of the Nahḍawī spirit of departure to new horizons, of rising to higher levels of civilisation, of energetic upswing and surpassing the inherited state of stagnation and decay. However, before success is reached and the novel concludes with a happy ending, the author also shows the many obstacles that still prevent easy progress, and in his description of the female protagonist’s toiling and suffering he almost goes to the limits of what the brave heroine can bear, in this respect coming quite close to Lāshīn’s enactment, in his “Village Small Talk” (cf. Chapter 14), of the clash of the enlightened urban intellectual with the ignorant, backward rural population, the core body of the envisaged nation-to-be. Her cheerfulness always prevents Güntekin’s heroine from falling into complete desperation; nevertheless, her struggle and suffering are often quite similar to the struggle and suffering of Lāshīn’s heroine Ḥawwā’ (Eve, in “Eve without Adam”, 1934) whom the author in the end lets give up all hope and commit suicide.

While the reader will have recognised in these protagonists the Nahḍawī social reformer, the *efendi* working relentlessly towards the bright utopian vision of common progress and a future on a higher level of civilisation, *Çalığışu* displays also many other features of the emerging subject’s wish to assert itself. For instance, the novel not only has a strong focus on the reform of male-female relations, women’s emancipation and their role in traditional society, but it also

stresses the virtuousness and absolute moral integrity of the heroine, a feature reminding of the innocent, chaste, and highly virtuous protagonists of Salim al-Bustānī, Jurji Zaydān, Jubrān Khalil Jubrān, al-Manfalūṭī, and others (see above, Chapters 10 and 11). Moreover, Güntekin's choice of a first-person narrator for the core chapters of the novel emphasizes the emerging subject's perspective that already Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq sought to underline six, seven decades earlier (see Chapter 8). In addition, Güntekin's heroine Ferīde combines the two aspects of emerging subjectivity noted in the introductory section to Chapter 11, namely the personal *and* the collective, as her personal struggles at the same time are the struggles of the emerging nation.

This is also reflected at the emotional level. While the nation-builders' love of independence and their exuberant optimism of departure to new horizons find their literary expression in the heroine's cheerful "wren" character, and while the postulated legitimacy of their aspirations is underlined via the protagonist's moral integrity, the nobility of their endeavour is emphasised, like in earlier Naḥḍawī texts, with the help of sentimentalism. However, Ferīde sheds a lot of tears not only because she, time and again, falls victim to a brutal patriarchal society, but also because she is so sensitive and full of compassion for the suffering of *others*. She is all feeling and caring, and with this, the emerging national subject surpasses the earlier Naḥḍawī subject's desire for self-assertion through self-pity. It reaches out and thereby overcomes its former isolation; emotionalism is put in the service of others now. The new ideal community as imagined in *Çalıkuşu* is a society based on spiritual and emotional kinship, on love, mutual understanding, and sympathy.

It is highly significant that Güntekin chose a *female* protagonist to represent these new qualities. But the proponent of the new ideals is not as independent as it may seem at first sight. In order to survive, the sensitive, compassionate and cheerful little 'wren' needs, as we shall see, the protection of a benevolent father-figure, and when the latter eventually dies, the 'wren' voluntarily chooses the 'cage' of matrimonium with the man she loves. Here, Ferīde closes her diary, that is, the first-person account in which the emerging national subject said "I", and with this, the process of her emancipation and self-formation is thought to have reached a happy end. In Chapter 16 below, we will look at the significance of such a contradiction from an overall historical perspective, as the individual national subject who has just given proof of his/her capability to act as an independent subject does not seem keen to remain really independent; rather, s/he is happy to deliver him/herself into the arms of a traditional 'male' ruler. Turkey found such a new leader in Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the "father" of the Turks'. In a similar vein, Ḥawwā' in Lāshīn's *Eve without Adam* would probably have been happy

to give up her previous life as an emancipated independent woman, had she only been so lucky to find a man who would have loved and married her. But she wasn't, so she committed suicide – in Egypt, 'Abd al-Nāṣir was not around yet... (With the collapse, or smelting together, of individuality and collectivity that we can observe here, Middle Eastern texts exhibit features that Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht described also for other parts of the 'global' world at roughly the same time, cf. his 'code' "Individuality vs. Collectivity" and his 'collapsed code' "Individuality = Collectivity (Führer)" – see above Chapter 14, especially 14.4.)

* * *

The novel *Çalikuşu* ("The Wren") by Reşat Nuri Güntekin (1889–1956) is not generally counted among literary works of high aesthetic quality, not even by native critics. Histories of modern Turkish literature nevertheless give it quite a prominent place¹ because of its enormous popularity.² Its publication in 1922 was a sweeping success and ensured the author's breakthrough, even though he had already written several short stories, two other novels and two plays (Kurdakul 1989, 294). *Çalikuşu* was first serialised in *Vaķit* and published immediately following in book form. The 450-page volume went through several editions within only a few years, becoming something of a 'cult book' for the youth in the early years of the Turkish Republic.³ Atatürk himself is said to have read it with fascination while at the front during the *Kurtuluş Savaşı*, the 'War of Liberation' (Karaalioglu 1982, 177) that would peak that very same year.

Çalikuşu is then a document the importance of which lies in the fact that it was able to offer the readers of the early 1920s a story through which many could see themselves represented in literature. As a novel it is worth considering not so much for its doubtful literary merit, but as a literary representation of a more general discourse that extends beyond the work as literature.

Before considering the process of literary representation, a short glance at the events of Reşat Nuri's novel will be useful to understand the imagery used in that work.

¹ Cf., e.g., *TDEA*, ii (1977):111–113; Özkırımlı 1987 (*TEA*, ii), 311–312; Kudret 1987 (*TEHR*, ii), esp. 313–330; Necatigil (1989) 1993, 99; Ünlü and Özcan 1988, 88–89; cf. also Spies 1943, esp. 64–65.

² The work's popularity can be seen from the fact that not only was the book adapted for staging (İstanbul Şehir Tiyatrosu, 1962, 1963) but also made into a film (in two parts, by Osman F. Seden, 1966). Moreover, the book continues to be used as a textbook for schools. Cf. *KnLL*, vii:16, with further references on both the author and his novels.

³ Cf. *TDEA*, iii:419: "gençliğin ellerinden düşmeyen bir eser" (a work the youth would not part with).

15.1 Contents

Çalılıkıuşu is known to have been written as a play to be performed, under the title *İstanbul Kızı* ('A Girl from Istanbul'), at the Darülbeydâî theatre; it was rejected however as 'unstageable', whereupon Reşat Nuri rewrote it as a novel (cf. *TDEA*, ii:113, s.v. "Çalılıkıuşu"). Its rejection by the theatre was due mainly to the fact that the principal events take place not in the late Ottoman Empire high-society world of decadent luxury and pomp which, at that time, was so much favoured by the theatre directors and the Darülbeydâî public alike (cf. *ibid.*), but in far away Anatolian villages and provincial towns, where the novel's heroine, Feride seeks refuge after suffering a serious crisis.

Feride is the daughter of a military officer and an Istanbul lady. Early in life she is orphaned. Nevertheless, she is brought up in the comfortable environment of her relatives, the well-to-do Istanbul circles of governors, *beys* and *paşas* living in *köşks* and noble *yalis*. On holiday from school, the prestigious *Notre Dame de Sion*⁴ directed by French nuns, she and her cousin Kâmurân fall in love and get engaged. Marriage is postponed, however – Feride is still only fifteen years old, and Kâmurân is first made to seize the opportunity of receiving training for a job as a diplomat in Europe. He stays there for several years. On his return – Feride is now in her early twenties – the wedding day is fixed. Three days before this 'ultimatum', however, Feride is told by a mysterious lady in black that Kâmurân, during a stay in Switzerland, promised marriage to another woman. Feride is shocked and runs away.

The narrative now switches (in the earlier editions at least) from the third to the first person,⁵ the second (and main) part of the novel consisting of the *diary* entries in which

4 This school was founded in 1856. Initially only Christian and Jewish girls were admitted, but from the beginning of the 20th century it was open also to Muslim girls. Turkish lessons were obligatory. The other subjects were taught in French, from 1918 onwards even in accordance with the syllabus effective in France. The boarding school was regarded as highly prestigious; it continued to be the educational institution preferred by higher officials and well-to-do circles for their daughters even in the Republican period. For this and similar schools, cf. the entry "Notre Dame de Sion Fransız Kız Lisesi" in *İstAns*, vi:94–95.

5 In the first four editions, Feride's diary (central part with the heroine herself as the first-person narrator) is framed between sections narrated in the third person. For the 5th edition (serialised 1937–1939 in *Yedigün* magazine) Reşat Nuri rewrote the initial section as the protagonist's first-person narrative. From the 6th edition onward, the whole book took the form of a personal diary (cf. Kudret 1987, ii:317). – Unless stated otherwise, my references are to the 3rd edition (Der-i Sa'âdet: İkbâl Kütübhanesi, 1343/1925) which is still more or less identical with the first. For the shape the novel took after the 6th edition I have consulted a modern 'Turkified' print (İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 37th edn, 1992). – *TDEA*, iii:420, lists translations into Serbo-Croatian (1925), Bulgarian (1931), and English (1949). I have seen only the translation into German by Max Schultz under the title *Zaunkönig: der Roman eines türkischen Mädchens* (Leipzig: A.H. Payne, 1942), which is based mainly on the novel's second edn (Der-i Sa'âdet: İkbâl Kütübhanesi, 1922).

Feride records what she experiences when, after her flight, she has to fight her way through and survive as an individual in contemporary society: a woman and an orphan who has broken off all connections with her relatives, without family support and fend-ing for herself.

The diploma of *Notre Dame de Sion* qualifies her to work as a teacher. In order to do so she must overcome many obstacles.

The first obstacle involves bureaucracy: an inexperienced, naive girl like her gets easily lost in the labyrinth of school administration and the maze of different sections of the *Ma'ârif Nezâreti*, the Ministry of Education, where she must apply for work and later when she is forced to leave one school to find a job in another. The obstacles present themselves in the form of corruption in the civil service, of arrogance among public officials and from the fact that, to get what you want, you need good contacts (which Feride does not have). Difficulties also emerge from Feride's being a woman, moving around and trying to get es-tablished in a male-dominated system, which is, in itself, part of an overall patriarchal so-cial system.

The second set of obstacles with which Feride has to cope arise from the countryside itself. The bureaucrats send her, the Western-educated young Turkish upper-class woman raised in an environment of urban modernity, to a remote and backward village in Anatolia, a far-away region known to most Istanbulites only as a place of exile (cf. Öner toy 1984, 18), where *kuş uçmaz, kervan geçmez* "neither a bird would fly nor a caravan pass by" (*Çalılıkısu* = Güntekin 1343/1925, 149). There, she has to adjust to both a miserable standard of living and the mentality of the poor and tradition-bound inhabitants. Eventually she is forced to do pioneering work with regard to the village children's education.

The third type of problems she encounters is rooted again in the patriarchal nature of society: since Feride is beautiful, men fall in love with her wherever she goes, even though she does nothing to encourage this. In her naivety, she does not even notice when men are courting her. Although she is herself decent and remains chaste, the mere fact that she be-comes an object of male desire makes her a subject for gossip. Eventually she is repeatedly forced by circumstances to flee those places where gossip and rumours label her a seduc-tress of men and where she is no longer accepted as a teacher.

In spite of such obstacles, Feride never loses her patience, her cheerfulness and merry outlook on life as well as her courage, love of freedom and desire for independence, in-nate qualities which have earned her, since she was at school, the nickname of *Çalılıkısu*, the 'Wren'.

In Kuşadası she meets an elderly military doctor who, despite his coarse manners and crude language, is good-natured and sensitive and adopts Feride as his protégée. Society, however, starts gossiping again, and in order to end all those false accusations and relieve Feride from all the continued attacks on her honour, he convinces her that the only solution is to marry him – a marriage on paper only, which does not change in any way the purely asexual father-daughter relationship between them. With the marriage, although it is only formal, Feride ends her diary because she feels that her life as an independent individual has now come to an end.

The rest of the story is quickly told: Feride's husband Hayrullah Bey dies not long after the marriage, leaving all his fortune – which is quite considerable – to his wife, in this way ensuring that she will not be forced to earn her living again as an unprotected individual. Since he had noticed from the beginning that Feride in reality has never stopped loving her cousin Kâmuran despite all that she felt she had suffered from him, Hayrullah arranges

that, after his death, Feride will meet Kâmuran and the young man will read her diary and know that she still loves him and that her virginity has not been compromised. After further delays, Kâmuran and Feride are united, Kâmuran's lips finally find Feride's and marriage follows – a veritable happy end!

15.2 Analysis

15.2.1 Feride, the New Woman

At first reading, Reşat Nuri's novel might be taken for a literary contribution to a period debate on the emancipation of women.⁶ After the first steps in the nineteenth century, the 1908 Young Turk Revolution initiated a number of new efforts in this field; a society for women's rights had been founded before World War I; magazines designed especially for women (like *Kadınlar Dünyası* "Women's World") had begun to appear; during the Balkan Wars women had started to work in the Red Crescent's military hospitals and later also in the field of telecommunications and in factories of different kinds; in 1917 matrimonial law had been amended in favour of women. In fact, Feride represents exactly that type of New Woman which was being promoted by the social reformers of the age, including those of the Arab world like Qāsim Amīn: a woman must not be excluded from education or secluded within the home, a woman should know what life really means so she can perform her duties all the better – duties that essentially remain unchanged, namely to serve in a male-dominated society, as wife, subservient companion, loving mother to her husband's children, perhaps even as a loving teacher to other people's children, or any number of other professions traditionally labelled 'feminine' because of the factor of 'love' in them.⁷ Thus, the two occupations carried out by Feride, our novel's idealised protagonist, are those of a teacher and a nurse, with the ultimate outcome of her experience of the outside world being voluntary and conscious surrender of her independence to enter her husband Kâmuran's service.

A reading focused on the question of women's emancipation is also supported by a statement the author himself made in 1937 looking back at what he had had in mind fifteen years earlier: "At that time, cheerfulness and love of independence were not looked upon as good points in women." One was afraid that

⁶ Cf. Kreiser 1991, 67. For more detailed information cf. also, e.g., *İstAns*, iv, s.v. "Kadın Der-gileri", "Kadın Hareketi", "Kadın Örgütleri", "Kadın Yayınevi", "Kadınlar Dünyası".

⁷ For Qāsim Amīn see, e.g., *EP*, iv, s.v. "Qāsim Amīn" (U. Rizzitano); his theories are summarised by, e.g., Hourani 1962, 164–166.

such women would become bad mothers and wives. “I wanted to show”, he continues,

that a bit of education, a bit of merriness, lightness and love of independence are nothing to be worried about in a girl, and that such girls will prove, if necessary, that they are much more qualified to master difficult situations than all those dignified and virtuous ones.

(Interview in *Yedigün*, 24 Dec. 1937, quoted in Öner toy 1984, 20–21)

15.2.2 Feride and personal/national identity

The interpretation of the novel as a literary argument for a ‘New Woman’ hardly explains its vast popularity. There must be more to it than a set of problems that occupied the minds of a rather small, educated elite. Indeed, Sibel Erol has shown that the novel is concerned with a much more general problem; “the search for personal identity”, she writes, “is pushed into a larger question of social and national identity” (Erol 1991, 65–82). This is done, she argues, by a number of powerful allusions to contemporary Turkey, such as the shifting of the scene – for the first time in a Turkish novel (*ibid.*, 80) – to Anatolia, the mention of the War of Liberation (Feride for some time works as a nurse in a military hospital looking after wounded soldiers), or the blue eyes of Feride’s adoptive father, Dr Hayrullah, a clear allusion to the blue eyes of that other great ‘father’, Atatürk, himself a kind of ‘doctor’ for the so-called ‘Sick Man of the Bosphorus’. The novel’s high potential for personal identification also derives from the “dynamics of the narrative” which consists in a “crumbling and reconstitution of family” as well as from the centrality of family itself through which “identity is defined”, as convincingly shown by Sibel Erol; in the course of the novel’s events, Feride’s adoptive family is replaced by a new family, one which is not simply given, but consciously chosen, based not on genetic or kinship relations but on spiritual and emotional affinity.

The appeal of Güntekin’s work may also be appreciated in terms of the simplicity of its plot. The *Encyclopaedia of Turkish Language and Literature*, for instance, notices that the story is clearly derived from traditional love stories known from Divan literature (like *Leyla and Mecnun* or *Ferhad and Şirin*) as well as from folk literature (e.g., *Kerem and Ashi*),⁸ archetypal stories of separated lovers, endured hardships and personal trials only to be re-united for a happy

⁸ Cf. *TDEA*, ii:113: “Romanda konu bakımından da bizdeki belli bir geleneğin sürdürüldüğünü görürüz” (We see that, thematically, too, a clear tradition of ours is continued in the novel). Kudret (1987, ii:314) calls *Çalkışu* “a modern *Kerem ile Ashi*”.

ending. Closer examination may even show that the plot structure of *Çalılıkusu* follows, *mutatis mutandis*, exactly the scheme drawn up by Vladimir Propp for (Russian) fairy tales (cf. Propp, ed./trad. Eimermacher, 1975).

15.2.3 Feride as the intellectual individual

The novel's attractiveness to a broad reading public has diverted the attention of earlier researchers, and until now our own, from the personality of the author, which is unfortunate, since I believe the novel's great success is largely a matter of coincidence, especially since its major themes are neither woman's liberation nor a search for collective identity, but mainly the author's own very personal problems and a 'self-glorification' of the intellectual.

If we consider for a moment the way in which the process of Feride's emancipation is depicted, we notice that emphasis is laid not so much on her being a woman, but on her *individuality*. This is expressed clearly in her name, Feride, which in Arabic (*farīda*) means "the unique, the exceptional one; hence also: the pearl". While she may be seen as a prototype of the New Woman, she is first and foremost an individual (facing society).⁹ Apparently, Reşat Nuri conceived women's emancipation as a struggle, essentially, of *individuals* against a hostile environment, which becomes evident from yet other elements of the text:

- Everything in the novel is centred around Feride, she is the narrative's single pole and only focus.¹⁰
- The author is interested in the way the individual subject experiences society. This is evident from his decision to have the events told in form of a diary.
- The heroine is not an average girl but one who is different from the very beginning – different from the girls in her family, from her classmates and from her female fellow teachers.
- While the obstacles she must overcome are complicated by her being a woman, most of them are not gender-related (e.g., the inflated bureaucracy, the backwardness of the Anatolian hinterland, or the practice of social control through gossip).

⁹ Cf. *TDEA*, iii:419: "Reşat Nuri, cemiyet içinde yaşayan ferdi ve ferdin iç dünyasını gözden kaçırmaz" (R.N. does not fail to show the individual living in society and in the individual's inner world).

¹⁰ Cf. Bakırcıoğlu (1983) 1986, 116: "Feride, baştan sona kadar olayların merkezindedir" (Feride is at the centre of events from the beginning to the end), and 117: *Çalılıkusu* "[...] yalnızca Feride'nin romanıdır [...] *Çalılıkusu*'nda bir 'karşı taraf' yoktur denilebilir" (... is only Feride's novel... It can be said that there is no 'counterpart' in *Çalılıkusu*).

- Feride's most characteristic features all imply a tendency to differ from social norms: from the beginning, innate traits such as the child's "uselessness/naughtiness" (*yaramazlık*) and "unruliness" (*afacanlık*) are underlined. Throughout the novel her childlike naturalness serves as a metaphor for her opting out of society, for her nonconformity and her disregard for taboos.¹¹
- The heroine's exemplary nature not only derives from her patience, virtue, and courage, but also from her individual taste and creativity: she loves to paint (*Çalığışu*, 140, 249), designs and sews her own clothes (*ibid.*, 247), and she is hardly conventional, making rational decisions on a case-by-case basis.

We may therefore assume that Feride represents not only the 'New Woman' but also a class of Western-educated intellectuals estranged from society and struggling as individuals, somewhere in a 'vacuum' between the upper classes, from which most of them derived but from which they felt estranged (cf. the metaphor of Feride's flight and break with her upper-class relatives), and ordinary people from whom they were separated through education (but upon whom they counted despite the social gap).¹² We may also assume that Feride is representative of the author, who is himself a member of that intellectual class who considered themselves the nation's teachers. Like Feride, the members of this group were convinced that they had a mission to spread, since only *they* possessed the right knowledge that would lead the country into a better future.

That the novel should be read, in the first place, as a clash between individual and society is also suggested by what I would like to call the 'Arabic analogy', i.e., the fact that the heroes of *Arabic* novels of the same period mostly display the very same central problem (Individual vs. Society) as well as very similar narrative features.¹³

11 Clearly Güntekin is influenced here by Rousseau (natural vs. social state). The importance of this philosopher is evidenced within the novel by the fact that Dr Hayrullah loves reading his books and takes them with him even when moving to his country estate (*çiftlik*) (cf. *Çalığışu*, 385, 449).

12 Still a child, Feride's best friend is an ordinary soldier in her father's service (cf. *Çalığışu*, 15 f.). Later she admires, e.g., the women of the garrison town "C." because "they are faithful, diligent, sociable and simple-natured people, content with their life" (*vefakâr, çalışkan, hayatlarından memnûn, munis ve sâde*, 281). Such people may be a bit unpolished (*kaba çaba*: e.g., 141, 351), but what matters is that they are all good-hearted (*iyi rûhlu*: *passim*).

13 Cf., e.g., Kilpatrick 1974, 19–58 (= ch. 2 "The Pioneers").

15.2.4 Male author – female protagonist

The fact that these early Arabic novels almost all have strong autobiographical traits leads one to look for corresponding features also in *Çalılıkı*, and here too there is much to be noted:¹⁴

- Güntekin's father was a military doctor (like Hayrullah Bey, Feride's spiritual father).¹⁵
- The father's appointments led the Güntekin family to move from place to place in Anatolia just as the child Feride and her mother followed the appointments of their father/husband in the Ottoman provinces.
- Reşat Nuri received part of his secondary education in the *İzmir Frère'ler Okulu*, a school run by Christian monks (Feride's *Notre Dame de Sion*, we recall, is a Christian school run by French nuns).
- Following completion of his education, the author, exactly like his heroine, worked as a teacher all over Anatolia. Thus, the places abbreviated in the novel as "B." or "C." are very likely to be identified with Bursa and Çanakkale both of which Reşat Nuri knew very well.¹⁶
- The state of affairs that Feride encounters in the educational bureaucracy is the same as the one the author himself had faced as a teacher.¹⁷
- Most significantly, Reşat Nuri kept a journal of his experiences in Anatolia, as Feride does. (The author's diary was published in two volumes much later, together with notes and reflections on Anatolia. The first volume appeared in 1936, the other in 1966, under the title *Anadolu Notları* 'Notes from Anatolia'.)

If the novel is basically a narrative dealing with the conflict between individual and society in general and between the author himself and his environment in particular, why then did Güntekin choose his protagonist to be a *woman*? Arab authors of that time, just like Reşat Nuri, tended to avoid 'real' autobiography and transformed themselves instead into heroes of autobiographical novels; such transformations often seem to be motivated by an author's fear of exposure as an antiheroic failure. They are unable to present stories of success, and the winner is more often society than the individual, just like in real life (cf. Guth 1998). One

¹⁴ For biographical information on Reşat Nuri see (always s.v. "Güntekin", unless otherwise specified): Necatigil (1989) 1993; Kurdakul 1989; Kudret 1987, ii:306–307; *TDEA*, iii; Özkırımlı 1987, ii; Işık 1990; Ünlü and Özcan 1988, ii:83–87. For further references see *KnLL* (as in note 2).

¹⁵ Spies 1943, 65, thinks that Dr. Hayrullah was modelled on a close friend of the father's.

¹⁶ Cf. Erol 1991, 69, fn.3 (referring to Bakırcıoğlu 1983, 112–113).

¹⁷ Cf. *TDEA*, ii:113: "yazar, [...] çok iyi tanıdığı eğitim ve öğretim teşkilatını gözler önüne serer" (the writer... shows the organisations of education and teaching that he knew very well).

might imagine that this kind of situation had some affinity to the situation of women and that the choice of a female protagonist suggested itself. Arab authors, however, appear unwilling to slip into the role of a woman; in order to dramatise the individual's suffering in society, for them it may seem sufficient to simply stylize themselves as heroes of a novel. To project oneself as the hero of a novel one needs not change one's sex. Why then would Reşat Nuri, who resists making the novel autobiographical – at least in the early stage – decide to adopt a woman's role to express his concerns?

The reason for this kind of 'cross-dressing' in literary representation is, without doubt, that the author found a female heroine more appropriate than a male hero to symbolise his own and his social group's situation. What then led him to identify with the feminine cause? Sibel Erol has already pointed out that in *Calıküşu*, masculinity, as inherited from traditional society, is associated with brutality and brutal male characters in the novel are connected in one way or another with the oppressive regime and legacy of 'Abdülhamid (cf. Erol 1991, 72).¹⁸ It is very likely therefore that the author saw himself and intellectuals like him as innocent victims of that patriarchal regime, a situation obviously more similar to that of women in traditional society than that of men (cf. Erol 1991, 66–67). Intellectuals like Reşat Nuri, I argue, see themselves as powerless and underprivileged, in a situation best rendered through the condition of a woman who, like Feride, suffers constantly the blows of quasi-fatal circumstances. Perhaps Feride's naivety¹⁹ has its parallel in a kind of naivety, conceived of as 'unmanly', among intellectuals unfamiliar with the mythical Anatolia in which they see the country's future. Their suffering is an inner reality that seeks to reveal itself through storytelling; it is however a very private, intimate reality suitable for an intimate journal – a literary form traditionally classified as specifically female (as opposed to other forms belonging more to the 'male' or public sphere).

In spite of all the suffering and the feeling of powerlessness, intellectuals like Reşat Nuri did not surrender to their fate; on the contrary, they offered a way out and sketched alternatives. In order to place themselves in opposition to a past rife with treachery and a present content to marginalize the educated individual, they made themselves advocates of honesty, tolerance, compassion and humanity and they painted the picture of a new society that integrated outsiders, a society

¹⁸ The despotism of the period before the Second Constitution (*II. Meşrutiyet*) is a theme Güntekin also dealt with in other novels, cf. Öner 1984, 20.

¹⁹ Cf. *TDEA*, ii:113: "Eser, romantik ve hayatın gerçeklerini hiç bilmeyen bir genç kızın macerasıdır" (The work is the adventure of a young romantic girl who does not know at all life's realities.)

based not on power, kinship or nepotism, but on love, mutual understanding and feelings of sympathy. It is for this reason, too, that a female protagonist must have seemed a more appropriate literary representation than a male character. Indeed, Feride's character displays all of these qualities; she suffers heroically because she is sensitive, she is all feeling, interiority and self-sacrifice for the sake of others.²⁰ Her virtues are absolute moral integrity and a personal humanity that reveals itself in her modest behaviour towards ordinary people (this is the uniting force between the intellectual and the uneducated, whether urban or Anatolian). She is compassionate and caring. Yakup Kadri, another famous author and social critic, even praised and thanked Reşat Nuri for having given his contemporaries a Turkish "Iphigenia" or "Chimène".²¹ Feride is the one who cares about children, especially marginalized children, the disfigured and poor. And she cares about orphans, a critical element in the story because it mirrors her own orphanhood and social abandonment, the very image the author chooses to represent the intellectual's isolation.

The qualities needed to build up and hold together a new society and its quintessential literary expression as the new family are stressed over and over throughout the novel. These qualities are best expressed through Munise, a poor village girl whom Feride adopts and saves from life as an outcast. She and Munise form the nucleus of the new family, the girl benefitting of course from this kind of integration, but also fulfilling the purpose of becoming Feride's *munise* (< Arabic *mu'nisa*), i.e., "one who entertains with her company".²² In this way, Munise helps Feride overcome her own isolation bringing her into the society by assigning her the role of motherly leader. The intellectual then tries to overcome his isolation by reaching out. First, he reaches out to ordinary people, the masses (Feride is shown breaking with her own social background, replacing it with a network of helpers from the lower layers of society, such as the elderly Armenian hotel servant, Hacı Kalfa, and his ridiculously uneducated family, or the black nurse Gülmisal, a former slave in a pasha's household). The intellectual then turns to spiritual values to create a community of spiritual kinship, epitomized by Feride's relationship with a colleague who is not only a music teacher but a composer and practising Sufi; the harmony between the two, the "secret spiritual

²⁰ For similar ways in which the educated middle-classes seek to express themselves through Arabic literature see Guth 1997b [= Chapter 11 in the present volume].

²¹ Cf. Kudret 1987, ii:316, quoting Yakup Kadri (Karaosmanoğlu)'s obituary on Reşat Nuri: "Edebiyatımızın Büyük Kaybı", *Tercüman*, 14 December 1956.

²² Stretching the Arabic etymology a little bit, one may even identify the essence of this companionship as 'human', given that Arabic *mu'nisa* is taken from the same root ('-n-s) as *'insān* "human being" or *'unās* "people, humans".

bond” (*gizli rûh ‘alâkası*, 348) is so complete that they need no words to communicate: understanding comes about non-verbally, through silent glances, listening to music, or weeping together.

The final reason for interpreting Feride’s character as the personification of the intellectual may be found in two other features of the novel: first, Feride is adopted by the old blue-eyed military doctor Hayrullah Bey, and second, she marries Kâmuran.

On the surface, these acts of subordination to men can be interpreted as manifestations of the belief in an essential subordination of the female *vis-à-vis* the male (see above). We might, however, also read this image as expressing the idea that the intellectual, too, longs to hand over responsibility to a superior leader and spiritual father, and only afterwards to a younger, chaste ‘cousin’, i.e., to Atatürk first and then to his heirs in the same way Kâmuran takes over from Hayrullah and assumes the latter’s legacy. “Yes”, says Feride, the independent intellectual and female incarnation of Reşat Nuri Güntekin, “Yes, I almost enjoy paying obedience” (*bu iğâ‘at ‘âdeta hoşuma gidiyor...*, 385).

Part VI: **From “upswing” to crisis and demise**
100 years of Middle Eastern modernity –
Thematic threads

16 From the discovery of the “independent self” to its crisis

A condensed literary history of the agency of the subject in Middle Eastern modernity

Originally published in German as “Von der Entdeckung zur Krise des ‘unabhängigen Selbst’”, in *Wissenskulturen muslimischer Gesellschaften: Philosophische und islamwissenschaftliche Zugänge*, ed. S. Tolino and K. Moser (Berlin 2023), 381–400

This chapter focuses, again, one aspect of emerging/emerged subjectivity: its independence from others. The independence of the self seems to be one of its indispensable features, which is without doubt the reason why it forms an essential dimension in this subject’s discourses from early on. The chapter attempts to give a historical overview over the evolution and the development of the concept in the Middle East, covering its ups and downs and its many modifications and mutations in fictional texts over a period of, roughly, one and a half centuries, from the mid-nineteenth to the end of the twentieth century. ‘Up’-phases (in which the subject feels that it can reach, or has already attained, independence) alternate almost regularly with ‘down’-phases (in which independence seems to be lost, or unachievable), and in each of them one may, from a long-term historical perspective, already discern the germs of the next, though contemporaries typically were unaware of the other side of the coin.

Thus, the first call for, or announcement of, an “independence of the self” at the turn of the 1860s was paralleled by the almost simultaneous emergence of a literary character – a European! – on whom the indigenous subject conferred the last judgement in all kinds of affairs, thereby conceding the independence of the critically thinking indigenous self to the western Other. In a similar vein, shortly after the ‘up’-phase of ‘yes, we can!’ nationalism, and sometimes still concomitant with it, many pioneers of nation-building fell into deep depression, losing all hope in the project of an independent nation, when they became aware of the apparently unbridgeable gap between their lofty ideals and the political, social, economic and cultural realities of the interwar period. The ensuing paralysis, however, generated hope again – a rather desperate, almost tragically ridiculous hope at first, though. But soon the enthusiastic belief in the actual possibility of true independence was renewed during the heyday of Nasserism, especially after the Suez crisis... – only to sink back into deep despair again when the June war of 1967 was lost and the faith in the power of the independent self (now the nation) was brutally destroyed, as

this power turned out to have been nothing but a nice, rhetorically embellished illusion. A few years earlier, the very project of modernity itself had already been called into question by authors like Nagīb Maḥfūz or Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar, and almost simultaneously with the catastrophe (*naksa*) of 1967, al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ had come with his sharp diagnosis, in his *Season of migration to the North* (1965/66), of a huge split running through the allegedly independent Arab self. It took many years for the Arab world to recover from this shock and start reconstructing a new self. While one may doubt whether or not they succeeded in their various efforts to reinvent their selves and independence, Orhan Pamuk came (for Turkey, but in principle also valid for the Arab world) with his postmodern ‘solution’, showing that originality, authenticity, and genuineness, independence, etc. all were vain delusions, as there can be no Self without the Other. Since then, only few authors seem to have taken up the self/other, independence/dependence question again. But have the last words about it been said already?

A question that could be interesting to look into in this context (but has not been followed in the article/chapter below for reasons of conciseness) is: Does the development described here correspond to Walter Falk’s *Potentialgeschichte*? Would it be possible to read the stages, sketched below, of the Middle Eastern independent self’s journey through the past one and a half centuries as specifications of more general processes of ‘global’ history? We have already become acquainted with two of Falk’s periods – “Reproductionism” and “Creativism” – and seen that there are strong indications pointing to a simultaneity of what at first sight may appear non-simultaneous (cf. Chapter 2). We have also seen that many of the earlier texts discussed in the preceding chapters (al-Khūrī’s *Way, idhan lastu bi-Ifranji*, al-Shidyāq’s *al-Sāq ‘alā l-sāq*, al-Marṣafī’s *al-Kalim al-thamān*, etc.) do indeed reflect a “reproductionist” spirit, while later ones are perhaps attributable to the ‘global’ “creativist” period. Given that the present book is about the ‘long nineteenth century’ I will not elaborate on the belonging, or non-belonging, of twentieth century texts now but will rather leave it to the reader or future researcher to try a parallel reading of the stages described below with Falk’s model, also for the post-Nahḍa / post-WW II periods. I will confine myself, therefore, to supplying Falk’s basic characterisations of the five ‘global’ periods of his *Potentialgeschichte* in which these stages might fall, and then simply leave it at this. Note, however, that a parallel reading is very likely to be feasible, given that an overlapping of the last stage discussed below – that of Orhan Pamuk’s postmodernist reversal of the old ‘East vs. West’ narrative (see section 16.8, below) – has already been shown to match the categories of Falk’s “Malistic” period very nicely (cf. Guth 1997a).

Reproductionism (c. 1820–80) ¹	AC – The general and lawful, prevailing in space [The old order of things, experienced as dated and governed by destructive forces of Nature]
	PC – The particular and unique, tending towards renewal [The subjective will to renewal in the spiritual and human(e)]
	RC – The individualising reproduction of the general [The new order of things, consisting of the absolute power of the forces of Nature and the destruction of all that is otherwise human. (Formally reinforced Actuality)]
Creativism (c. 1880–1920) ²	AC – The finite character of Life, due to its being a life in Time
	PC – The creativity of the subject, nourished by Nature- and space-related forces
	RC – The Transnatural, not subject to the laws of Time
Spatism (c. 1920–50) ³	AC – The objectification of life within/through temporal processes
	PC – The subject’s ability to exist other than as a thing/object
	RC – The timeless structures in their discoverability
Tempism (c. 1950–80) ⁴	AC – Life turning around itself in Space
	PC – The pre-subjective power of renewal, acting outside Space but in Time
	RC – The qualitatively new condition/state, produced/created/generated in/through Time

1 Original German: “[AC:] Das Allgemeine und Gesetzshafte, herrschend im Raum [Die veraltete Ordnung zerstörerischer Naturkräfte]; [PC:] Das Besondere und Einzigartige, tendierend zur Erneuerung [Der subjektive Wille zur Erneuerung im Geistigen, im Menschlichen]; [RC:] Die individualisierende Reproduktion des Allgemeinen [Neuartige Ordnung der Dinge, bestehend aus der absoluten Macht der Naturkräfte und der Zerstörung alles wesentlich Menschlichen. (Formal gesteigerte Aktualität)]” – Falk 1984, 31. Component titles given in square brackets reflect earlier terminology as in Falk 1983, 206.

2 German: “AK: Der durch die Zeitlichkeit bedingte endliche Charakter des Lebens | PK: Die Kreativität des Subjekts, getragen von naturhaft-raumbezogenen Kräften; | RK: Das Transnaturale als das Zeitenthobene” – Falk 1984, 34.

3 German: “[AC:] Die Dinghaftigkeit des Lebens innerhalb zeitlicher Abläufe; | [PC:] Die Fähigkeit zur außerordentlichen Existenz des Subjekts; | [RC:] Die zeitlosen Strukturen in ihrer Entdeckbarkeit” – Falk 1984, 71.

4 German: “[AC:] Das räumliche, in sich selbst kreisende Leben; | [PC:] Die präsubjektive Erneuerungskraft, wirkend auf raumlos-zeithafte Weise; | [RC:] Das Gezeitigte als qualitativ neuartiger Zustand” – Falk 1984, 35 and 71.

Malism
(c. 1880-2010)⁵

AC – The ‘destroyed house’ or ‘lost home’, Life in ruins, destroyed by the forces of Evil

PC – The discovery of a hidden ‘treasure’, remained undamaged by destruction

RC – Results of efforts to raise the ‘treasure’ from the ‘ruins’

* * *

As a key concept of modernity, closely linked to the that of “freedom” and political sovereignty, the term “independence” has undoubtedly played a prominent role not only in the West (especially since the American independence movement) but has also been of paramount importance in formerly colonised countries, including larger parts of the Middle East and North Africa. When did it make its first appearance in the region? In which context(s) was it used then, and which native terminology was used to introduce it and make it attractive? And what happened to the ideal of “independence” over time? – Drawing on works of fiction (which in general is a rich and giving source for such investigations), this essay attempts to outline the history of the idea for the first hundred and fifty years or so, a development that, as we will see, is closely linked to the project of a Middle Eastern modernity and will lead from the discovery of the independence of the subject to its deep crisis. The focus is on Arabic texts and the Arab world, but evidence from Turkish novels and novellas is also repeatedly evaluated.

16.1 Background

The verbal noun *istiqlāl*, which is commonly understood as “independence” nowadays, has a long history. According to the *Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic* (DHDA), it can be traced back to the early Islamic era.⁶ However, the original meaning of *istiqlāl* at its first mention is quite different; it signifies a “holding in little esteem” or “treating as insignificant” (cf. the adjective *qalīl* “little”), often

⁵ Discussed in some detail in Guth 2007a. – No original German formulaic terms provided for this period, as W. Falk passed away before he was able to elaborate on the “Malistic” period in a follow-up study to his descriptions of earlier periods.

⁶ DHDA mentions as first attestation a saying dated <75 AH / 694 CE, attributed to the Umayyad ruler ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān; see DHDA, s.v. استقلال .

associated with “contempt”.⁷ This initial meaning makes it challenging to establish a direct semantic connection between the early and later usages of the term. It is quite likely, therefore, that the latter meaning evolved from another concept connected to the Arabic root *vQLL*, namely, **“to separate oneself, become isolated, act alone”*. Reflexes of this basic idea can be found, for example, in the pre-Islamic *istaqalla* “to depart, set out” (*DHDA*: –108 AH / 517 CE⁸) and especially in two meanings already attested in verses by the poet Imru’ al-Qays: *istaqalla* “to rise, be high in the sky (stars, etc.)” and *mustaqill* “elevated, sublime” (*DHDA*: –80 AH / 544 AD).⁹

16.2 Semantic transformation

The semantic spectrum covered by the term *istiqlāl* seems to have been quite varied from early on,¹⁰ and it remained largely unchanged, apparently, until the nineteenth century when additional meanings began to emerge. Unfortunately, due to the limited digitization of Arabic texts from the Nahḍa, it is still challenging to provide reliable and lexically-grounded information about the first usage of modern terms or the adoption of old lexemes with new and modern meanings. Therefore, our understanding is based on a somewhat impressionistic approach, although the insights and findings of scholars who have extensively studied

7 To the same semantic complex “little” – attested also in other Semitic languages (Bergsträsser 1928 reconstructs the basic meaning **“light, little, fast”*) – belong also the active participle *mustaqill* “taking little” (opposite: *mustakthir*) (according to *DHDA* attested already c. 60 years earlier, <11 AH / 632 CE) and the corresponding verb *istaqalla* “to do little (*min al-shay’* of s.th.)” (e.g., to pray little) (opposite: *istakthara*), see *DHDA*, s.v. *استقلّ* , *استقلّ* .

8 Cf. *DHDA*, s.v. *استقلّ* .

9 It is still unclear how (and if at all) the complex “little” may (or may not) be etymologically related to that of “to separate o.s., stay apart” as well as to that of “take up, lift”; cf. my entry on the root *vQL*: (*QLL*) in *EtymArab* (see Bibliography).

10 De Biberstein Kazimirski’s *Dictionnaire* (1860), which is based on Firūzābādī’s *Qāmūs* (14th c.), lists 13 ‘classical’ meanings for the verb *istaqalla* alone: “1 trouver, estimer qu’il y a peu; trouver que le nombre de personnes est petit; *de là*: 2 regarder avec dédain, tenir peu compte de...; 3 partir, s’en aller (se dit des hommes); 4 hisser sur ses épaules ou sur sa tête et porter (*p.ex.*, une cruche); 5 être haut, sublime, bien haut au-dessus de nos têtes (en parlant de la voûte des cieux, etc.); 6 grandir (se dit des plantes); 7 s’élever très-haut (*fī* dans les airs, se dit d’un oiseau); 8 s’enorgueillir, s’élever au-dessus de ses semblables (se dit d’un homme fier); 9 se rétablir et se lever (se dit d’un malade); 10 être saisi d’un tremblement; 11 se mettre en colère; 12 saisir qn (se dit d’un tremblement); 13 s’emparer exclusivement de qc (*p.ex.* du pouvoir), *et de là*: être souverain indépendant. – Au passif, *ustuqilla nawman*: être plongé dans un profond sommeil” – Kazimirski 1860, s.r. *QLL*.

Nahḍa texts should not be underestimated. With the caveat that future adjustments may be necessary, based on computer-assisted analysis of larger and representative data sets, the current state of research suggests that *istiqlāl* first appeared in the late 1850s with the modern meaning of “independence”, serving as an equivalent to the French term *indépendance*. The choice of the Arabic word was likely influenced by its previous usage in Ottoman administrative language where it denoted the independent or unrestricted decision-making authority of higher-ranking officials, particularly military commanders or provincial governors.¹¹ At that time, the meaning of *istiqlāl* still bore some resemblance to that of *istibdād*, which would later come to signify “absolutism, autocracy”, and even “despotism, tyranny”.¹² However, starting from the mid-nineteenth century, there are indications that

the new meaning of “sovereign independence” was becoming known, and it is specifically cited in a British consular dispatch of 1858 from Jerusalem.¹³ By the late nineteenth century, the use of *istiqlāl* in the sense of “political sovereignty” or “independence” was general in both Turkish and Arabic. Together with “freedom”, it came to express the ultimate objective of political struggle against oppressive rule in the period of European imperial domination, and the somewhat longer period of European intellectual influence.

(Lewis 1988/1991, 112; my quotation marks – S.G.)

From almost the same year of Lewis’s diplomatic note stems the (to my best knowledge) first recorded instance of the phrase *istiqlāl dhātī*, meaning “personal independence” or “independence of the self”. The phrase appears in the programmatic preface (*muqaddima*) to Khalīl al-Khūrī’s novel *Way, idhan lastu bi-*

¹¹ Lewis (1988) 1991, 112, with endnote 44 (referring to “Meninski, p. 199” and “Clodius, p. 558”, where Ottoman Turkish *istiqlāl* is rendered as “absolute authority, full power”). – Cf. also Kazimirski 1860: *istiqlāl* “indépendance, pouvoir indépendant d’un souverain”; and Zenker 1866: *istiqlāl* “action de s’emparer exclusivement de qc, pouvoir absolu [...] | das [A]usschliesslich[-H]aben, ungetheilt mit anderen, Machtvollkommenheit, unumschränkte Macht [...]”. – Three decades earlier (1828), Bocthor included *indépendance* as a lemma in his dictionary, but suggested *hurriyya* “freedom”, *‘adam al-‘alāqa bi-* „non-relation to” as its Arabic counterpart, not *istiqlāl*; for *indépendant* in the sense of “qui ne dépend de personne” he did give *mustaqill*, but only as one of several other alternatives, among which also *khālīṣ* and *qā’im bi-dhātih*. Bocthor’s Arabic terms do not reflect use in actual language, but have to be seen as the author’s own suggestions.

¹² Lewis (1988) 1991, 112, gives an Ottoman attestation from 1834 where *istiqlāl* still contrasts with *serbestī* “freedom”. – Cf. also al-Bustānī 1869 (s.v. QLL): „*istaqalla bi-ra’yih* = *istabadda bih*, [ruler, governor:] *tafarrada bi-l-wilāya*, *lam yushrik-hu fihā gayruh* (to exercise sovereign power alone, not sharing it with anyone)”.

¹³ Lewis (1988) 1991, 158, n. 46: “Cited by A. L. Tibawi, *British Interests in Palestine 1800–1901* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 147–48”.

Ifrañjī (“Woe, so I am not a European after all!”), initially published in 1859 in *Ḥaḍīqat al-Akhbār* and subsequently as a stand-alone book in 1860.¹⁴ The context there is a literary-theoretical discourse, wherein the author critically examines two poems about Aleppo – one in Arabic by al-Mutanabbī and another in French by Lamartine. This analysis culminates in a plea for realism and a credible portrayal of reality as well as for a more passionate writing. Furthermore, al-Khūrī emphasizes that the contemporary poet should consider it among his foremost responsibilities/duties (*wājibāt*) to

always remain aware of the independence of his self and his freedom (*an yash'ura bi-istiqlālīhi l-dhātī wa-ḥurriyyatihī*¹⁵) and not allow his works to be used as tools for the execution of the wishes and goals of others. He must act according to the principle of the wise philosopher Socrates, who believed that the truth that inspires his noble intellect cannot be sold.¹⁶

Only in this way can the most important mission of poetry be fulfilled, that is, to “make an impression on the soul [of the readership, of fellow human beings]”. This, however, can only be achieved by a poet who is capable of “making people feel what he feels”, and for this, the consciousness and “feeling” of freedom and *istiqlāl dhātī* are essential.¹⁷

As we can see, the political dimension that the term *istiqlāl* could already take a little earlier (as Lewis demonstrated) and which would become prominent in the following years, is initially absent from al-Khūrī’s literary-theoretical discussion on poetic authenticity. Nevertheless, his concept of “personal independence” is definitively a modern concept as well. Al-Khūrī’s *istiqlāl* no longer refers to the undivided power and unrestricted decision-making authority of a ruler. Instead, the author combines *istiqlāl* with the nisba adjective *dhātī* and in this way

¹⁴ I have worked extensively on the novel myself, first in my habilitation thesis (Guth 2003b), where I relied heavily on R. Wielandt’s (1980) analysis, then in a more detailed article (Guth 2019/20). In both studies the reader will find references to relevant secondary literature.

¹⁵ The original (journal) version of the novel (1859) still has *ḥurriyyat al-inshā’* “writerly freedom” instead of the more general *ḥurriyya* “freedom” of the book edition (1860), see ed. Dāğir 2009, 64, note 7. From one year to the next, the author has thus made a huge generalisation – an indication that it had now become important for al-Khūrī to understand literary activity as just one of many other areas in which independence and freedom could be restricted. It makes sense to see this expansion in connection with the increased politicisation of the situation in the year of the ‘first Lebanese civil war’.

¹⁶ ومن أهم واجباته أن يشعر باستقلاله الذاتي وحرية. وأن لا يكون آلة لتنفيذ مآرب الناس وغايتهم. وأن يسلك على مبدأ – سقراط الحكيم في عدم بيع الحقيقة التي ينزلها الإلهام على قريحته الفاضلة – al-Khūrī 1860, 20–21; orthography and punctuation follows ed. Dāğir 2009, 64.

¹⁷ Ibid.

with the “self”, *dhāt*, interpreting the phrase *istiqlāl dhātī* here specifically as the freedom and autonomy of the poetic subject. In the context of the discussion on authenticity and passion in poetry, this independent-creative subject not only observes and critically evaluates its environment but is also a feeling, sensitive self. At the same time, a critical perspective and emotional sensibility are also expected from the readership.

Other passages in al-Khūrī’s *muqaddima*, as well as the novel itself, further expand the scope of the term *istiqlāl*. Set in the 1850s, the story is about a case of “Euromania”, Arabic *tafarnuj* (“to act/ behave like a ‘Frank’, i.e., a European”), a phenomenon that was apparently spreading rapidly in Middle Eastern societies at the time. The novel not only highlights the embarrassing absurdities of ignorant imitation of Western fashions but also vividly portrays the potentially tragic consequences of a careless abandonment or denial of one’s own “Eastern/Oriental” identity – the “indigenous/native way of existence” (*wujūd ahlī*¹⁸), as al-Khūrī calls it: the anti-hero falls into the clutches of a fraudster; an engagement is broken; an upright young Arab ends up in depression and leaves the country; out of shame and remorse, a young woman becomes a nun, etc. It is evident, therefore, that al-Khūrī’s admonition to preserve the “independence of the self” is not only of poetological relevance but also concerns cultural identity per se. In his opinion, contemporaries should have every reason to be proud of their identity. Unfortunately, however, not everybody was aware of this – a situation that was all the more deplorable since nothing less than the upswing (*nahḍa*) of the nation (*umma*) was at stake (al-Khūrī 1860, 58, where *umma* is understood primarily as a cultural, not yet a political entity).

16.3 A hidden crack in self-confidence

In *Way*, *idhan lastu bi-Ifranji*, we encounter a “self” that exhibits the features of modern subjectivity in several respects. The subject-object divide, a key indicator of modernity,¹⁹ is clearly completed – the author-narrator’s “I” as the subject is facing the world as its object –, and this “I” is asserting the “independence” of its self by critically observing, rationally analysing and evaluating the objective

¹⁸ My translation follows Wielandt’s rendering as “einheimische Art der Existenz” (see above, note 14). For detailed textual references, cf. *ibid.*

¹⁹ See entries “Subjekt” (W. Mesch), “Subjekt-Objekt-Spaltung” (*id.*), and “Subjektivität” (M. Esfeld) in Prechtel and Burkard, eds, 1999.

world.²⁰ The subject, conscious of its “independence” and its identity as a rational and moral authority, is further characterised by its creativity and emotionality: it is a poetic “I”, capable of talking about the world in symbolic representations, as well as a feeling, sensitive “I”.

Recent research suggests that there may be indicators of an earlier emergence of the type of subject that is speaking from al-Khūrī’s text.²¹ As far as I know, however, it is only here that the new “independence of the self” makes itself *explicit* for the first time. Al-Khūrī’s “independent self” not only displays self-awareness, but also a corresponding feeling of self-confidence and superiority. In particular, his subject marks its agency by criticising society, often in form of biting satire. Accordingly, al-Khūrī describes his anti-hero Mikhālī’s ignorant Euromania from the position of the sharp observer and superior critic, who himself has the sovereign overview and therefore can ridicule the widespread vice of his contemporaries using Mikhālī as an example.

In contrast to the anti-hero, al-Khūrī’s narrator – who may be largely equated with the author²² and stands for the emerging *efendiyya* elite – apparently considers himself immune to the challenges of his time. Nowhere does he doubt himself or the modern ideal of the “independent self” as such. His self-confidence and superiority bear traits of elitism and arrogance – in this respect, one could recognise in his *istiqlāl* not only the new “independence” but perhaps also remnants of the older meaning as quasi-self-rule “autocracy” (see above).

Thus convinced of himself, the narrator-author does not realise that his own self is in fact not as independent as he apparently assumes. Rotraud Wielandt has identified a typical figure in the literature of the time, which she calls the “European confirmer-on-duty” (German: *Bestätiger vom Dienst* – Wielandt 1980, 57). According to Wielandt, this figure first appeared in ‘pure’ form in 1882, the year of the British occupation of Egypt, in ‘Alī Mubārak’s *‘Alam al-Dīn*. In essence,

20 As I argued in Guth 2021a [Chapter 3], self-reference is, in my view, reflected also in the many verbs, verbal nouns and participles containing the *t*-morpheme that seem to become typical of modern Arabic morpho-semantics since the Nahḍa. As a verbal noun of form X, *istiqlāl* too belongs to this group, given that form X is the self-reflexive *t*-form of form IV, signifying, etymologically, a “raising/exposing, separating (*aqalla*, *iqāl*) oneself”. (The first component of the *-st*-prefix of form X, *-s-*, is a ‘remnant’ of the old Semitic causative morpheme **-š-*, which in the Arabic form IV surfaces as *-ʔ-* but has been preserved in combination with the reflexive *-t-* as *-st-*.)

21 Cf. Guth 2021b.

22 At various points in the preface, the author emphasizes that the events to be recounted below occurred only recently, at a time when he himself was in Aleppo. In the subsequent main part of the book, the novel, the narrating “I” cannot be distinguished from the “I” of the (non-fictional) preface.

however, it is already found in al-Khūrī’s *Way*, albeit only indirectly and to a certain extent *ex negativo*, i.e., in the figure of the French “Comte” Edmond (who is in fact a crook). For it is him who, in the novel as a whole, ultimately plays “the role of the one who has to confirm and certify to the author’s [...] reference group [...] that they are, after all, the superior ones in everything that matters” (ibid.).²³ “Comte” Edmond does so by repeatedly exposing the ignorance of the would-be European Mikhālī and also by ultimately proving right the narrator-author’s analysis and critique of society. It seems legitimate to evaluate, with Wielandt, “the appearance of such a figure [...] as an indication of an already broken cultural self-confidence” (ibid.)²⁴ – the author needs a European even to support his *warning against* Euromania!

As we shall see, the propagation of independence without having made one’s inner self truly free was to have fatal consequences in the future. At the time, however, the subject had only recently become aware of its “independence” and was only gradually becoming fully aware of its new agency. As full awareness was reached only later, in the course of becoming a nation, and as the first priority for the subject then was to exercise its newly gained *political* freedom and independence, it took no less than about a century until it became truly aware of the ‘split’ in its self and of its *de facto* dependence. Only then was the subject to understand that things had to go differently.

16.4 The “independent self” affirming and establishing itself

Now that a subjectivity with the aforementioned facets has emerged in the Middle East, the actors, and in particular the *efendiyya* group, are mainly concerned with further expanding and consolidating the many different aspects of their strengthened selves. The subject is now increasingly an acting subject, acting above all in public, a subject that not only performs its agency as a social analyst and critic, but also participates actively in reforming the community and works towards “modernisation” and “progress”. With the Ottoman Empire gradually falling apart, it does so increasingly within a discourse of nation-statehood, where the independent nation takes the place of the individual “independent self” at the political level. As already mentioned above, the term *istaqlāl* is therefore from now on predominantly used in the context of nation-building and the shaking off

23 German: „die Rolle desjenigen, der der [...] Bezugsgruppe des Autors [...] zu bescheinigen hat, daß sie im Entscheidenden doch die Überlegenen sind”.

24 German: “Indiz für ein bereits gebrochenes kulturelles Selbstbewußtsein”.

of the colonial (or quasi-colonial) yoke, and cultural dominance in general.²⁵ The personal “independent self” continues to unfold as a thinking, contemplating, analysing, critically commenting and evaluating agent, but now mostly with reference to the “national cause” – it is the time of the *literati* who distinguish themselves as intellectuals and commit themselves to reform and progress of the community in the sense of a “modern” nation-state with a “modern” society. Once the political foundations for establishing this goal are laid, such as in Turkey after the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, or in Egypt after the country’s release into (formal) independence the year before, optimism spreads. Confirmed in everything it has stood for so far, the “independent self” sees no reason to doubt itself and its agency. When it had seen little hope for political development and felt rather powerless, especially before the First World War, it had often sought compensatory affirmation – through eloquent castigation of the sultan’s despotism²⁶ or the corruption at his court,²⁷ through ‘philosophical’ contemplation,²⁸ or through an aesthetics of tearful (self-) pity and sentimentalism that staged its own powerlessness as tragedy and/or stylised its sensitivity and morality as a ‘nobility of the heart’.²⁹ The self-confident subject had, however, repeatedly drafted utopias of political and cultural sovereignty even before this, as is evidenced, e.g., by al-Kawākibī’s *Umm al-Qurā* (“Mother of all Cities”, i.e., Mecca, 1899). In this work, the author imagined an Arab caliphate in the Prophet’s hometown that was to be independent of the sultanate in Istanbul, thereby reclaiming at least spiritual supremacy over the Islamic world. In a similar vein, Ömer Seyfeddin’s *Gizli Ma’bed* (“The Secret Temple”, ca. 1919) told the story of the triumph of an enlightened native intellectual (the author’s alter ego) over

25 Significantly, Vincent Monteil listed *istiqlāl* among those *mots-clefs* that came to complement, towards the end of the century, the “Eight (Key) Concepts” of Ḥ. al-Marṣafī’s famous treatise (*al-Kalim al-thamān*, 1880) on a political level and to which Monteil assigned a high degree of “expressivity” and “explosive” potential, due to their “affectivité vague et violente” (*mots-clefs expressifs, vocabulaire ‘explosif’*) – Monteil 1960, 213–14. – For al-Marṣafī’s treatise in general, and his understanding of *waṭan* “fatherland” in particular, see above, Chapter 5.

26 See, e.g., ‘A. al-Kawākibī’s *Ṭabā’i’ al-istibdād* (“The Nature of Despotism”, 1900), or J. Kh. Jubrān’s novella *Ṣurākh al-qubūr* (“The Cry of the Graves”, in *al-Arwāḥ al-mutamarrida*, 1908).

27 See, e.g., Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī’s *Mā hunālik* (1895–96; English translation by Roger Allen as *Over Yonder*, in id., *Spies, Scandals & Sultans: Istanbul in the Twilight of the Ottoman Empire*, 2007).

28 See, e.g., M. L. al-Manfalūṭī’s *Nazarāt* (“Contemplations”, as book 1910), J. Kh. Jubrān’s *The Prophet / al-Nabiyy* (1923).

29 See, e.g., al-Manfalūṭī’s *‘Abarāt* (“The Tears”, 1910) or Jubrān’s *al-Ajniḥa al-mutakassira* (“The Broken Wings”, 1912). – On the “flood of tears” in early modern Arabic literature, see above, Chapter 11, with further references.

the ignorance of an Orient-loving Frenchman, thereby reclaiming from the non-natives the hegemony of discourse over his country’s affairs.

While the personal self now seems to be largely established, intellectuals continue working on the profile of the independent *national* self. This is reflected in many areas, for example in literary theory, where programmes for an independent “national literature” (*adab qawmī, millī edebiyât*) are being drafted and an author and member of the “Modern School” movement (*al-Madrassa al-Ḥadītha*) such as ‘Īsà ‘Ubayd calls his colleagues to study in detail all the factors that form the “national character”, the “Egyptian personality” (*al-shakḥsiyya al-miṣriyya*), and to portray it realistically in stories with plenty of “typical Egyptian” local colour.³⁰ There is a lot to do: the national temperament (*mazāj*) has to be understood as a product of ‘mixing’ (*m-z-j*) genetic predispositions and various external influences, such as social milieu (*wasat*) and climate, and one has to capture the “genuine” and “authentic” in its “national” typicality and with all its manifold shades.³¹ Underlying such drafts of a national identity is the idea that progress and modernity as observed in the West are ideals to strive for, ideals that can become real also in one’s own country if only the “independence of the (national) self” is truly achieved. This idea was to shape the thinking and actions of intellectuals and other patriotic agents and kept motivating them to work towards this goal for decades to come. An example of the enthusiasm with which this project initially is approached is the new Turkish national anthem, composed by Mehmet Âkif (Ersoy) and officially published in the “Official Gazette” (*Cerîde-i Resmîyye*) as *İstiklâl Marşı* (“Independence March”) as early as 1921.³²

16.5 Doubts and paralysing setbacks

What is overlooked in the process is a tragic paradox: the pursuit, out of a feeling of inferiority, of independence from Western domination runs parallel to the project of becoming *like* the Western nations; in other words, an independence in dependence, or a dependence in independence. Admitting this is, of course, very difficult for a self that has only recently begun to feel itself and exercise its

³⁰ For a commented English translation of this preface, cf. above, Chapter 12.

³¹ The example of ‘Īsà ‘Ubayd’s foreword clearly shows how much such constructions of the “independent national self” are influenced by contemporary ideas of positivism, philosophy of life, psychoanalysis, etc.

³² “İstiklâl Marşı’nın millî marş olarak kabulünden sonra, TBMM Hükümeti’nin resmî gazetesini *Cerîde-i Resmîyye*’nin 21 Mart 1337 [1921] tarihli 7. sayısında yayımlanmış hali” (Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi Arşivi) – Okay 2001/2021.

agency. For some time, intellectuals therefore typically do not blame themselves for the failure of their reform efforts; instead, they seek the fault in the broad masses, in their attachment to traditional ways of thinking and social structures, their superstition, their “backwardness”, their passive obedience and submissiveness, and so on. The fact that large parts of the population, i.e., those who actually make up the “nation”, often do not want to know anything about the “civilisation” and “progress” that the secular educated elite has planned for them and that they are, to a certain extent, resistant to “modernity”, is generally experienced by the intellectuals as a deep crisis of their own agency. But this does not, or only very gradually, lead them to doubt the project of an independent “modern” nation state *as such*.

Modern Middle Eastern literature knows several highly impressive examples of such crises of subjects engaged in nation-building. One of the earliest was penned by a member of the above-mentioned “Modern School”, Maḥmūd Ṭāhir Lāshīn (1894–1954). In his novella *Ḥadīth al-qarya* (“Village Small Talk”, 1929),³³ an urban intellectual and his friend enter into conversation with a group of villagers, representatives of the rural population, i.e., genuine members of the Egyptian nation-to-be. The conversation takes place at the friend’s country estate. The first-person narrator’s passionate appeal to his listeners to free themselves from self-inflicted misery through education – self-awareness and action determined by free will could, he tells them, work miracles³⁴ – is countered by the village sheikh with the cautionary example of a peasant who had moved to the city “of his own free will” for a better and easier job. In the city, however, his wife had soon cheated on him with his employer. The man had ended up brutally slaying them both. The urban intellectual has no chance against the rhetoric of the sheikh who speaks “to the hearts” of the villagers. As if to laugh at him, the frogs croak incessantly in the background. While he and his friend remain sitting around the dim light (!) of a paraffin lamp, the villagers follow their sheikh into the darkness (!) – the project of enlightenment has failed.

Five years later, Lāshīn goes still a step further. In the novel *Ḥawwā’ bi-lā Ādam* (“Eve without Adam”, 1934),³⁵ the heroine, a young, ambitious teacher from the lower class, ends up taking her own life when she realises that although she was able to free herself from the circumstances of her background through

33 English translation by Sabry Hafez, in id. 1993, 262–268. On the novella itself, cf. *ibid.*, esp. chapter 7 (“The Culmination of a Sophisticated Discourse”, 233–261).

34 Note the narrator’s argument with core elements of the “independent self”!

35 English translation by Saad El-Gabalawy, in id. 1986, 49–94.

diligence, hard work and education, this resulted in her double isolation and deprived her of the chance to find personal happiness. She feels alienated from the world she comes from, but also finds no acceptance in the one she wants to be accepted by: for the son of a notable family whom she teaches as a private tutor and with whom she falls in love, she is at no time a possible partner because of her lowly origins, as the upper classes do not care about the educational efforts of the lower classes and the class barriers remain insurmountable. Like in “Village Small Talk”, the author stages the failure of the basically laudable pioneering efforts of an “independent self” to reform the nation as a bitter, tragic-ironic ending: On the heroine’s deathbed, her old grandmother, representative of the ‘imprisonment’ of larger parts of the population in ignorance and superstitious tradition, performs an exorcistic ritual on her granddaughter, representative of progressive enlightenment and emancipation. In other words: The very forces against which Ḥawwā’/Eve had fought all her life (and with whose description the novel began) emerge victorious in the end – all her efforts were in vain.

Significantly, Lāshīn gave up his writing career after *Ḥawwā’ bi-lā Ādam*, drawing the consequence from the experience that the majority of the nation was apparently not yet ready to keep up with the emancipation of the “independent self” that he and his peers had already accomplished on an individual, personal level.

Similar to Lāshīn’s *Ḥadīth al-qarya*, also Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu’s *Yaban* (1932) and Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm’s *Yawmiyyāt nā’ib fi l-aryāf* (1937)³⁶ show an unbridgeable gap between the modern urban intellectual and the ‘traditional’ rural population. In all these texts, the narrators turn out to be unable to communicate with the rural population, the true, genuine representatives of the nation-to-be; the ‘people’ meet them with mistrust and hostility, and this experience deeply shatters their “independent selves” and their sense of agency. Significantly, all but *Ḥawwā’ bi-lā Ādam* are written from the first-person perspective of the experiencing subject, and in *Ḥawwā’*, too, the narrator largely adopts the point of view of his (female) protagonist.³⁷ Despite everything, however, the narrator-authors hardly have any real doubts about the meaningfulness of the project of modernisation *as such*. Their failure plunges them into deep crises, but they mainly seek the cause for this in *the others’* attachment to tradition and *their*

³⁶ English translation by Abba Eban as *Maze of Justice: Diary of a Country Prosecutor; an Egyptian novel* (1947). – For the novel, see Kilpatrick 1974 and ead. 1974, passim; Wielandt, “Yawmiyyāt...”, in *KnLL* (1988–92), vii:182; Guth 2003b, 116–135 and passim (compared to Yakup Kadri’s *Yaban*).

³⁷ For the question of gendering cf. below, Chapter 15.

backwardness, which they themselves (their own “independent selves”) can no longer comprehend. Like the philosopher of German Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant, in whose intellectual footsteps they implicitly follow, they are convinced of the “self-inflicted immaturity and irresponsibility”³⁸ of their environment.

16.6 Ideologisation is no solution either

This fundamental conviction does not change even in those cases in which the intellectuals end up concluding that a solution to the conflict might be that it is not the “people” who should meet *their* expectations, but they themselves who should make a step in the “*people*”’s direction. In Yaḥyà Ḥaqqī’s short novel *Qindil Umm Hāshim*,³⁹ written in 1939/40 (and published in 1944), the protagonist, who like Ḥawwā’ in Lāshīn’s novel, has a lower class background, encounters similar difficulties on his return to Egypt after having received training as an ophthalmologist in Britain: Since the broad masses do not trust in the ‘blessings’ of Western medicine, he initially fails in his attempt to treat his compatriots according to the latest findings of modern ophthalmology. In despair, he considers returning to Europe, but on a Ramadan night he suddenly has an epiphany that shows him the way out of the crisis: since there can be “no knowledge without faith” (*lā ‘ilm^a bi-lā imān*), he must combine modern medicine with traditional practices. From then on, he treats his patients’ eye ailments using both the modern methods he learned in England and the sooty oil from a lamp in the nearby mosque, whose healing power people believe in because the lamp hangs above the tomb of the saint-like Umm Hāshim. The combination turns out to be successful – how exactly, the text leaves open. Is the holy oil only applied externally? Then one could infer that the intellectual’s approach to the unenlightened masses is only pro forma, in a sense by means of a trick that leaves them in the old faith/superstition, but in reality only trusts in the efficiency of modern medicine.

On the other hand, the text also describes an inner change in the protagonist: after he has already moved out of his parents’ house and has long considered emigrating altogether, from a certain point on he begins to feel attracted by the

³⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* (1784). The German term is “selbstverschuldete Unmündigkeit”.

³⁹ Plot summary in Wielandt, “Qindil Umm Hāshim”, in *KnLL* (1988–92), vii:282–283, as well as Wielandt 1980, 386 ff. (both with further references).

crowds surging in the large square in front of the Holy Mosque and, when immersed in them, to feel a quasi-mystical fusion with “the people”. Since this fusion in the novel prepares the way for the protagonist’s subsequent enlightenment, it can be assumed that the author saw a solution to the problem not only in a purely external combination of modernity and tradition, but also wanted the approach of the “independent self” to the collective to be understood here as a necessary – and possible – genuine becoming-one. Wielandt rightly assesses this as a “return” (German: *Rückwendung*) of the meanwhile Westernised Egyptian to his “original cultural identity” and – particularly interesting in our context – as an irrational “act of faith, a mystical surrender of the hero’s new self, which he had built up in Europe on his own, without authorisation, to a numinous authority, behind which nothing else is concealed but the ultimately unbroken power of the native cultural tradition to determine Ismā’il in his self-awareness even after his studies abroad” (Wielandt 1980, 396–397).⁴⁰ In other words: Yaḥyà Ḥaqqī here proposes as a solution to the gap between the “independent self” of the intellectual and the population at large, the absorption of the former into the collective, constructing the native communal spirit as “a collective attitude of a quasi-religious character, inherited through long historical experience”⁴¹ (and thereby become part of the individual’s genetic constitution) (ibid., 392).

The fact that “solutions” such as this are basically ridiculous, though *tragicomic*, ideologisations was already seen through a little later by A.H. Tanpınar in his famous key novel, *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (1954–, as a book in 1961/62⁴²). The titular “clock-setting/time regulation institute”, which progressive Turks (“independent subjects”!) have been running for years as a large-scale project and which has taken upon itself the task of synchronising Turkish clocks with Western time (!), proves in the end to be completely superfluous, since, as American (!) visitors quickly demonstrate, one can in the meantime quite simply make use of the electronic time announcement by telephone – with all their efforts for modernisation, the administrators of East-West synchronisation have in the end

⁴⁰ German: “ein mystisches Sichaufgeben des in Europa eigenmächtig aufgebauten neuen Selbst des Helden vor einer numinosen Instanz, hinter der sich nichts anderes verbirgt als die im letzten ungebrochene Kraft der heimischen Kulturtradition, Ismā’il in seinem Selbstbewußtsein auch noch nach dem Auslandsstudium zu bestimmen”.

⁴¹ German: “eine durch lange historische Erfahrungen in die Erbmasse eingegangene kollektive Haltung mit quasireligiösem Charakter”.

⁴² Translated into English by Ender Gürol as *The Time Regulation Institute* (2001).

simply slept through it, the modernity they have created is nothing but an inauthentic *caricature* of modernity!⁴³

Sharp and sarcastic-critical analyses such as Tanpınar's showed that an awareness of being on a *tragi*(comi)cal wrong track had occasionally already emerged early on, and a crack in the "subject of history" had thus become visible in some places in the Middle East. However, it was to take another decade or so before this awareness gained broader momentum. A further breakthrough of such insights was hampered, at least in the Arab world, since the beginning of the 1950s, by the high spirits that spread with the rise of Gamāl 'Abd an-Nāṣir (Nasser). During the first years of the Egyptian president's rule, the "independent self" that had emerged as an idea in the nineteenth century appeared to receive renewed confirmation that it was on the right path. Comprehensive modernisation projects, in particular large-scale agricultural and educational reforms as well as massive industrialisation promoted optimism about the future and spread confidence in the possibility of national independence. This is evidenced not only by statements such as those of Moroccan Prime Minister 'Abdallāh Ibrāhīm, who in 1959 commented on the introduction of mechanised agriculture in his country – the king himself symbolically drove the first tractor – with the words: "It's here that independence begins!" (*al-istiqlāl min hunā yabda'* – quoted in Monteil 1960, 360–61), but also, for example, a Turkish novel like Talip Apaydın's *Sarı Traktör* ("The Yellow Tractor", 1958), in which the arrival of the tractor in a village is celebrated with similar enthusiasm because it promises rapid economic and social progress.⁴⁴ In such high spirits, everything seemed feasible to many. Moreover, writers now increasingly came from lower classes and adhered to "popular" ideologies, so that the deep gulf between the "independent self" of the intellectuals and the broad masses, which had been so paralysing before, seemed to be overcome.

Such naïve optimism was, of course, rather suspect to more perceptive and sensitive contemporaries, as the example of Tanpınar already showed. At about the same time when Tanpınar smiled sadly-critically at the paradox of a subject imagining itself independent while ultimately remaining dependent, Nagīb Maḥfūz pointed out another problem. In his famous novel *Awlād ḥāritnā*,⁴⁵ the first instalments of which appeared in 1959, he made the protagonist 'Arafa – representing modern science and thus the modern subject – indirectly guilty of the

43 C.K. Neumann, "Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü", in *KnLL* (1988–92), xvi:337; revised by id. and A. Menz, in *KLL* (print version 2009, updated Jan. 2010). See also Moran 2004, 297–322.

44 For the novel cf. my entry "Sarı Traktör", in *KLL* (2009).

45 English translation (as *Children of Gebelawi*) by Philip Stewart (1981).

death of the old patriarch Gabalāwī (= God), whose house he had invaded. The hubris of the modern subject thus becomes the reason why the traditional belief in God is deprived of its foundations. Interestingly, the author nevertheless lets Gabalāwī look with benevolence on ‘Arafa, in this way ultimately bestowing divine blessing on the replacement of the belief in God by science⁴⁶ – a solution that may seem paradoxical⁴⁷ but is certainly less ideological-mystical than Yaḥyà Ḥaqqī’s in *Qindīl Umm Hāshim*, even though it is a clear indication of the fact that the “independent subject” still needs confirmation by religious authority.

This is expressed even more clearly in the short story *Za‘balāwī* from Nagīb Maḥfūẓ’s pen, published two years later (1961).⁴⁸ The protagonist in this story is an anonymous first-person narrator who suffers from an unspecified serious disease – it is the “independent self”, fallen ill due to modernity. Significantly, the protagonist believes that healing can only come from a wise old man, a saint named Za‘balāwī. The similarity of the latter’s name to the name of God, Gabalāwī, in *Awlād ḥāritnā* is certainly not coincidental. Everyone the hero meets assures him that Za‘balāwī does indeed exist and that he was sighted only a short time ago, only now he is once again somewhere else. Towards the end of the narrative, after a long and unsuccessful search, the protagonist falls asleep in a state of intoxication (after having drunk a lot in a bar). In a dream, he experiences a paradise-like ambience, a blissful state of complete relaxation (*ḡāya min al-irtiyāḥ*) and ecstatic serenity, in which there is “a marvelous harmony between me and my inner self (*baynī wa-bayna nafsī*) and between both of us and the world (*wa-baynanā wa-bayna l-dunyā*)”. When he wakes up, he learns that Za‘balāwī, the saint he had been looking for all the time, had visited the place while he was sleeping. Now, however, he has disappeared again, and the narrator realises that his search for the “doctor” who might be able to heal the deep rupture in his self will have to continue indefinitely. As in Tanpınar’s novel, a central problem of Middle Eastern modernity is turned into a tragicomic here, too: In modern times, the “independent self” can experience the reality/presence of God only in a state of intoxication!

⁴⁶ R. Wielandt and A. Pflitsch, “Aulād Ḥāritnā”, in *KLL* (2009).

⁴⁷ Wielandt/Pflitsch, *ibid.*, call it a „Paradoxon“.

⁴⁸ Translated into English by Denys Johnson-Davies as “Zaabalawi”, in *id.*, ed./tr., *Modern Arabic Short Stories* (1967). – On the story, cf., among others, especially Gordon 1990 and Elad 1994 (with further references, among which also Somekh 1970).

16.7 The peak of the crisis

The protagonist's dream in Maḥfūẓ's *Zaʿbalāwī* makes explicit for the first time what was to become the main theme a few years later in al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ's *Mawsim al-hijra ilā l-shamāl* ("Season of Migration to the North", 1965/66):⁴⁹ A deep rift runs through the modern Middle Eastern ego, the supposedly "independent" self, a rift that one could already suspect since the second half of the nineteenth century, but which had always been covered up. Now, however, in *Mawsim al-hijra*, it is reflected deeply in the novel's structure and symbolism. Significantly, the narrative has not only one but two protagonists. It begins with the return of an unnamed first-person narrator from studies in England, immediately after his homeland, Sudan, has gained political independence. The young man is of good cheer and full of hope for the future, animated by that naïve optimism which, as we saw, was still widespread in much of the Arab world in the late 1950s/early 1960s. But he soon meets a compatriot named Muṣṭafā Saʿīd, in many ways a mirror image of himself, who had studied in England like himself, but a generation earlier, still in the days of colonialism. As it turns out, Muṣṭafā was not only an outstanding student, but also served a long prison sentence as a murderer. For in a desire to take revenge for all the humiliations that the colonial masters had inflicted on his homeland, he had systematically seduced young English women and driven them to suicide; when one of the women had resisted him, he had strangled her. When Muṣṭafā mysteriously disappears one day – probably having taken his own life – the first-person narrator becomes the administrator of his estate. The legacy (!) consists, among other things, of Muṣṭafā's house, including the key (!) to a room,

which no one but he [Muṣṭafā] himself had ever been allowed to enter during his lifetime. When the narrator opens the room, it turns out to be a temple of European culture, filled with books brought from England and decorated with all kinds of memorabilia, including a portrait of Jean Morris [i.e., the woman Muṣṭafā had killed]. The room symbolises how much Muṣṭafā Saʿīd's inner self was torn apart: even after his return to the Sudanese countryside, he could no longer live without the culture of his former colonial master.

(Wielandt and Pflitsch, "Mawsim al-hijra ilā š-šamāl", in *KLL*
2009 – my translation, S.G.)

This triggers a deep crisis in the first-person narrator, because the view into Muṣṭafā's secret room is at the same time a view into his own inner self: he be-

⁴⁹ English translation by Denys Johnson-Davies (1969).

comes “aware that his [own] sense of cultural belonging has also been irrevocably broken by the profound assimilation to the former colonial power” (ibid.). During his stay in England, he has absorbed and “internalised” the former colonial master’s culture, to the effect that it now “perpetuates” European dominance in his own psyche, a dominance that his country had struggled hard and fought to get rid of on the political level, so that the attainment of *political* independence has basically not changed anything about the fact of inner, *cultural* dependence – the outwardly “independent self” has taken on the legacy of a split personality. Significantly, the novel ends with the narrator’s cry for help, as he almost drowns while bathing in the Nile (= in the stream of time).

Just one year after the novel’s publication, the entire Arab world was to experience an analogous collapse and crisis: With the defeat of the Arab armies in the June War of 1967, the Nasserist dream of a great independent Arab nation turned out to be nothing but a beautiful bubble, the project of an independent Arab modernity a failure.

16.8 After the breakdown

As in Šālih’s novel, the trauma shattered life in the Middle East to its deepest existential foundations. And it lasted for a long time. It found immediate literary expression, for example, in the completely incomprehensible absurdity of the ‘meaningless’ plot of Maḥfūz’s short story *Taḥt al-miẓalla* (“Under the Bus Shelter”, written in 1967).⁵⁰ After that, the shock was followed by a phase in which authors tried to find new sustainable foundations on which to (re-)build one’s view of the world and one’s self. A main idea here was that the catastrophe had happened because modernity was not genuine and independence only imagined and that, therefore, the main task now was to find the *true*, genuine, authentic self. This is why the movement that sought to develop a “new sensibility” (*ḥassāsiyya jadida*)⁵¹ for this purpose, was primarily concerned with *ta’šīl*, i.e., “making authentic” or “rooting” things in trustworthy, reliable ground (the verbal noun *ta’šīl* is derived from *’ašl* “root, trunk, foundation, origin”). (The massive strengthening of “fundamentalist” Islamist currents can, by the way, be seen in the same context.)

⁵⁰ English translation by Roger Allen, in Kassem and Hashem, eds. 1996, 85–92. – For an analysis of the story, cf., e.g., Fāhndrich 1991, 119–23.

⁵¹ After having been introduced by Šabīrī Ḥāfiẓ, the term gained currency through the analyses of Egyptian author and literary critic Edward al-Kharrāṭ.

But did this not ultimately mean that one was going round in circles? In all the efforts to radically re-found thinking “from below”, it was overlooked that the idea of an authentic identity was basically no different from the “independence of the self” that thinkers like Khalīl al-Khūrī had called for a hundred years earlier, and that the real problem could lie in the modern idea of independence and authenticity itself. It was to take another generation for a Middle Eastern author to realise this, ushering in an era that was not only a new version of modernity, but truly postmodern. In works such as *Beyaz Kale* (“The White Castle”, 1985)⁵² or *Kara Kitap* (“Black Book”, 1990),⁵³ Orhan Pamuk came up with a surprising solution: Identities build on each other like palimpsests, East and West are mirror images of each other; so, trying to find a “pure, true, genuine, independent” self was futile because, simply, there is no such independence, purity, or genuineness.⁵⁴

⁵² English translation by Victoria Holbrook (1991).

⁵³ English translation by Maureen Freely (1990).

⁵⁴ On postmodernism in modern Arabic and Turkish fiction in general, cf. my study “Individuality lost, fun gained” (Guth 2007a); on Pamuk’s *Kara Kitap*, cf. Guth 1996.

17 Fading trust in the Nahḍa

Three Middle Eastern utopias

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This chapter: Like the preceding Chapter 16, this chapter too aims at a historical overview. The time span covered – from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century – is roughly the same, and so is also the general trend described, as it follows a development “From ‘Upswing’ to Crisis and Demise” (as indicated in the title of Part VI). The number of sample texts looked at, however, is much lower now – only three –, and therefore also the intervals between them are considerably longer – half a century (or a bit less) here, as compared to one or two decades in Chapter 16. As a consequence, this chapter is, on the one hand, less ‘fine-tuned’ than the preceding. On the other, the essay’s ‘spot light’ approach will hopefully allow us to see the broad lines of historical development more clearly. The texts discussed are three quite well-known short utopias: Faṭḥ-‘Alī Ākhund-zādah (Fatali Akhundov)’s *Setāregān-e ferib-khorde* (“The Deceived Stars”) of 1857, Muṣṭafā Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī’s *Madīnat al-sa‘āda* (“The Happy City”) of 1907, and Yūsuf Idrīs’s *Jumhūriyyat Faraḥāt* (“Farahat’s Republic”) of 1954, and the genre studied – utopia – has been chosen because it has *per se*, as an essentially ‘modern’ genre imagining alternative worlds, a close affinity to the Nahḍa as a huge ‘utopian’ project that always had the creation of another better world in mind. As we will see, the evolution of the genre in the Middle East is very similar to that of its Western predecessors, or counterparts, and it is also closely related to our book’s main theme, emerging subjectivity. We will first deal with a *spatial* utopia, a variety of the genre that does not yet care about agency in time and history but can be read as an indicator of secularisation where a formerly *heavenly* paradise becomes imagined as a paradise *on earth* – a precondition for the appearance of the subject as acting in and upon the world. In a next step, we will be able to observe the *subjectivisation* of the genre where typically first-person narrators travel around in the world and happen to discover, in a remote place, an alternative better world, an expression of the emerging subject starting to move around in the world and to interact with it as its object. (It is certainly no coincidence that a novel with such a plot – Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* -- was one of the first European texts to be translated into Middle Eastern languages.) When

the Nahḍa has gained momentum, also the next phase, that of *temporalisation*, can be observed. It corresponds to a subject that has become fully aware of its agency in the world and its capability to change things – and the course of history – by working towards a better future. In the long run, however, the overall optimism gradually fades away, with former utopian visions increasingly turning into pessimistic *dystopias*.

Like in Chapter 16, it could be interesting to submit the texts discussed below to a Componential Analysis according to the Falkian model. The dates of publication – 1857, 1907, and 1954 – suggest a reading of Akhundov’s “Deceived Stars” as a document of “Reproductionism”, while al-Manfalūṭī’s “Happy City” is likely to express a “Creativist” worldview, and Idrīs’s “Farahat’s Republic” was probably still written under the influence of the spirit of “Spatism” (not yet “Tempism”).¹ But these are only guesses, and only a thorough analysis would be able to substantiate these initial hypotheses or prove them wrong.

* * *

17.1 Introduction

It is a well-established fact in utopia theory that the imagined worlds of utopias always are closely related to the real world in which they are produced, that they ‘mirror’ this world, ‘reflect’ it, or ‘answer’ to it, and that utopias thus have a ‘front’ and a ‘reverse side’.² Theories of the genre also seem to agree that utopias typically appear at the threshold of new periods, in times of transition in which an old order of things is increasingly felt to be dated and in need of substitution with a new one, and that they in this way are excellent indicators of fundamental changes in the world view of a given society.³ There is also broad consensus that, in the West, the emergence of the genre has to be seen as a function of the dawn of what is usually called Modern Times,⁴ an ensemble of processes that began to gain momentum during the Renaissance, with its shift of attention from the divine to the earthly and its humanist turn, processes also that later were enhanced by Enlightenment with its belief in reason and the possibility of progress, first

¹ For an overview of the “period formulas”, see above, end of introductory section of Chapter 16.

² Cf. Wilpert 2001b, 865b (“Gegenbild der Wirklichkeit”), Voßkamp 1996, 1931 (“Antwortcharakter”).

³ Cf. Wilpert 2001b, 866a.

⁴ Cf. Vieira’s statement that “[t]he concept of utopia is no doubt an attribute of modern thought, and one of its most visible consequences” – Vieira 2010, 6.

morally and then, with industrialisation advancing, also technologically. Connected as they are to these developments, Western utopias thus are always in themselves expressions of the fundamental process of secularisation that is characteristic of modernity: as visions of ‘paradises on earth’ (or other places of the concrete, scientifically accessible or imaginable world), they replace the medieval religious idea of a Paradise that may wait for humankind at the end of all time, somewhere in an unspecified and unspecifiable ‘heavenly’ sphere.

No wonder then that the emergence of the utopian genre in the Middle East was fostered by similar conditions, albeit considerably later. First examples of utopian texts can be encountered in the middle of the nineteenth century,⁵ i.e., in a period in which the Middle East underwent radical change due to its increased integration into global economy, the experience of a cultural-civilisational and in larger parts also military superiority and hegemony of the West, and Middle Eastern societies’ reactions to these challenges, consisting, among other things, of a set of wide-ranging reforms, initiated by the state and implying the secularisation of key sectors of learning and life in general, as well as an intensified engagement with the ideas of the French Revolution, itself a ‘child’ of Enlightenment. In the Ottoman context, the period is usually addressed as that of the *Tanzimat*, i.e., “(re-) organisation, reforms” (< *tanẓīmāt*, pl. of Arabic *tanẓīm*, verbal noun of *nazzama* “to put in proper order, rearrange”, from *niẓām* “system, order”). In the Arab(ic) context, the most common term is less political-administrative than the Ottoman one but rather stresses the cultural perspective: the so-called *Nahḍa* is the age, or movement, of a cultural “revival” or “resurgence”, an “upswing”

5 I am not counting here texts like al-Fārābī’s (872–950) *Fī mabādī’ ārā’ ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* (on this, cf. Barbaro 2013, 43), Ibn Ṭufayl’s (1105–1185) *Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān* (ibid., 33), or the story of “Abdallah the Fisherman and Abdallah the Merman” (from the *1001 Nights*) which sometimes are mentioned as early ‘predecessors’ of the utopian genre in Arabic literature. Although all of these have utopian elements, the first is a religious-philosophical treatise, the second imagines human perfection, both building heavily on the philosophical heritage of late Antiquity; and the third is an “inverted reflection of society on land” where “almost everything is different [...]”. However, the story is not really setting out a political programme. It offers something that is wonderful because it is strange, not something that is wonderful because it is a blueprint for the ideal of life in society” (Irwin 1994, 212). – In a similar vein, also Giritli ‘Alī ‘Aziz Efendī’s (1749–1798) *Muḥayyelāt* (written 1796–97, first printed 1852) cannot be counted as utopian even though they are not only fantastic, but also rather ‘modern’. – All these texts can be regarded as what Vieira 2010, 6, calls “pre-figurations of utopia, as they lack the tension between the affirmation of a possibility and the negation of its fulfilment”. Therefore, they are “allotopias” rather than utopias.

(from *nahaḍa* “to rise, get up”), often also translated as “renaissance” or “awakening”.⁶

And no wonder also that utopia in the Middle East, too, reflects the situation in the *real* world and that the development of the genre can serve as an indicator of social, political and ideological change and Middle Eastern societies’ attitude towards the project of *tanzimat/nahḍa/modernity*.⁷ The fact that “modernity” was not yet ‘there’ in the Middle East of the nineteenth century made it into a utopia in the very literal sense of the word – it had “no place” (Greek *où + tópos*) yet in the region –, and the strive for “modernity” was essentially the ensemble of attempts to make the modernist vision come true,⁸ an utopia that, like in the West, was no religious, heavenly paradise any longer but an essentially secularised vision.⁹ Given the integral unity between literature and society, an analysis of utopian fiction from the nineteenth century until now will allow us to describe the destiny of the modernist project in the Middle East at large.

6 Cf. the title of George Antonius’ classic, *The Arab Awakening* (1939) (here with a focus on the political and nation-building). Another classic on the era, written by Albert Hourani, is more concerned with the intellectual-cultural dimensions under the title of *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (1962).

7 The essentially realist dimension of Middle Eastern utopia, i.e., its ultimate rootedness in and constant reference to *contemporary* reality, could not prevent the genre’s overall marginalisation within modern literature as a whole. This is due to the fact that, “[a]long most of the twentieth century, the dominant canon of Arabic prose focused on the [non-utopian, more overtly] realist novel as the primary, ‘authentic’ form of expression, whereby writers and intellectuals deployed their formative, educational function to the nation. The canonization of this prevalent view has obscured to some degree the importance of more imaginative, ‘utopian’ (in a broad sense) writing attempts [...], as it also excluded other literary forms” – Lauri 2019, 121, referring also to Samah Selim’s statement that “[r]ealism is enshrined, in both Europe and the Arab world, as the canonical foundation of all literary modernities” (Selim 2003, 110).

8 Cf. Habermas 1997 (“Modernity: An Unfinished Project”). – As Pernau 2018, 65, rightly observes, modernisation and progress formed part of a universalistic model of development (“universalistische[s] Entwicklungsmodell”), so that it always seemed possible for the ‘not-yet-developed’ to recover lost time and catch up with the ‘civilised nations’. Vieira speaks of an “optimistic worldview” grounded on “a global theory of evolution” (2010, 10) and also underlines the fact that “historical progress was believed to be inevitable” and therefore “affected not only the utopist’s country, but all nations. The utopian project thus took on a universal dimension” (ibid., 11).

9 An indicator of the secular character is the fact that the ultimate purpose of the utopias is (human) *happiness*, not beatitude or religious bliss in recompense for compliance with the divine orders.

17.2 The utopian genre in the West

In the West, the development is characterised by four main traits, each of which is indicative of major ‘events’, or stages, in the history of Western man’s relation to the project of enlightenment and modernity:

- Early utopias in general are ‘*spatial*’ utopias.¹⁰ They imagine a counter-world somewhere, in another place (often an island or a remote country or planet), as something desirable, but without assigning it a place on a developmental timeline that would be assumed to be universal, valid for the whole of mankind, nor elaborating on ‘how it felt/feels/will feel’ to live in such a world. This step can be seen as the immediate successor of Christian Paradise, a secularisation of the religious vision: Paradise has been desacralised, but has still kept its former timelessness and ‘objectivity’ (in the sense that it is too remote and still so much beyond reach that it is hard to imagine a human being to ‘live’ it, ‘feel’ it, experience it in concrete detail).
- This changes towards the end of the seventeenth and in the early eighteenth century. While utopias until then have remained rather abstract ideas, they become more accessible and ‘tangible’ now, worlds that the human subject can be imagined to experience.¹¹ Important indicators of this fundamental shift, the *subjectivation* of the genre, are the preference of *first-person narrators* and the organisation of utopias as *travel narratives*. Typical representatives of this stage are the so-called Robinsonades, a sub-genre that, as can be guessed from the term, goes back to Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), a work that owes its overwhelming popularity to the fact that utopia here suddenly is presented as a world that, despite its remoteness, is in human reach, and as the concrete experience of a living subject.¹²
- Yet, utopias that have been subjectivised in this way are still not necessarily imagined to represent a stage in universal history that mankind can or necessarily will reach some time in the future if the present continues to develop as it seems to develop. This step, the *temporalisation* of utopias in which hitherto spatial-static (though perhaps subjectivised) models of a perfect order of things are assigned a place in future history and the *process* of *creating* such an ideal order comes in the focus, is effected in Europe from the last third of

¹⁰ Voßkamp 1996, 1932–34, mentions, for instance, Thomas Morus’ *Utopia* (1516), Tommaso Campanella’s *Civitas Solis* (written 1601, first printed 1623), or Francis Bacon’s *Nova Atlantis* (publ. posthum 1627) as examples of such ‘spatial utopias’.

¹¹ Voßkamp 1996, 1935 ff.

¹² Voßkamp 1996, 1936, speaks of a strong “Bindung an einen konkret vorstellbaren Ich-Erzähler, so daß die Entdeckung des neuen Landes als Erfahrungsprozeß dargestellt werden kann”.

the eighteenth century onwards, forming part of the fundamental transformation that is essential to what Reinhard Koselleck called the European “saddle period”.¹³ Due to increased secularisation as well as the development of the sciences and the belief in history as a *process* and the possibility of *progress*, attention during this stage shifts from *perfectio* to *perfectibilité*.¹⁴ According to Voßkamp, the beginning of this stage in European utopian writing is marked by Louis-Sébastien Mercier’s (1740–1814) *L’an deux mille quatre cent quarante, rêve s’il en fut jamais* (“The Year 2440...”,¹⁵ 1770), the first utopian novel that is set in the *future*.¹⁶ Vieira reserves the term “euchronia” for this type of utopias in which “the utopian wish give[s] place to hope”.¹⁷

- From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, in the West the place of the utopian genre that until then had expressed confident belief in the progress of humanity and the perfectibility of society is increasingly taken by pessimistic, *dystopic* visions.¹⁸ Initially triggered by the experience of the negative consequences of technological progress during the age of industrialisation – an exemplary novel in this context is Samuel Butler’s (1835–1902) *Erewhon* (1872)¹⁹ – the transition from utopia to dystopia is further enhanced and completed by the traumata of World War I²⁰ and World War II,²¹ both of which

13 Voßkamp 1996, 1932. – Cf. also Vieira 2010, 9 who states that the shift from spatial utopias to what she calls “euchronia” (see end of paragraph above, and fn. 17) marks the transition, in Europe, from Renaissance to Enlightenment: “In the Renaissance, man discovered that there were alternative options to the society he lived in, became aware of the infinite powers of reason and understood that the construction of the future was in his hands. In the Enlightenment, man discovered that reason could enable him not only to have a happy life, but also to reach human perfection”.

14 Voßkamp 1996, 1938. – According to Vieira 2010, 10, the idea of “infinite human perfectibility” was first expressed, in Europe, by Anne-Robert Turgot in his lectures at the Sorbonne in 1750, then further developed by the Marquis de Condorcet in his *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* (1795), which emphasised man’s important role in this process.

15 In a contemporaneous English translation, the year of the title was altered: *Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred*, translated by W. Hooper, London 1772.

16 Voßkamp 1996, 1938; Vieira 2010, 10–11. – On the novel, cf., e.g., Jeschke 2009.

17 Vieira 2010, 9.

18 Cf. the chapter entitled “From hope to disbelief and despair: satirical utopia, anti-utopia and dystopia”, in Vieira 2010, 15–18.

19 The title represents the word *nowhere* in reverse, in this way turning *ou-topia* into its contrary.

20 Cf. the emergence of key texts of the dystopic genre like Yevgeny I. Zamyatin’s *Мы* (We, written 1920–21, English translation 1924) or Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932).

21 Cf., e.g., George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (1945) or *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) both of which appeared shortly after the end of World War II.

catastrophes of mankind that shake the very foundations of the previous belief in the character of Enlightenment and modernity.

17.3 Three Middle Eastern utopias

The following contribution consists of a close reading of some selected Middle Eastern utopias with the aim of finding out whether or not the genre developed along similar lines as in the West. As we will see, this question can *grosso modo* be answered in the affirmative, although the genre emerged much later and its history thus is considerably ‘condensed’ and, perhaps, the chapter less ‘closed’ than in the West yet.²²

My analysis will cover three famous pieces of utopian fiction, written by prominent authors from the Middle East at three different periods, in this way assuming some kind of representativeness and generalisability. All along this journey through a bit more than a century, I will also try to show that Middle Eastern utopian thinking obviously developed, by and large, along the same lines that have been described for Western utopias.

The texts that will form the basis of my analysis are:

- Mirzā Faṭḥ-‘Alī Ākhundzādah (Fatali Akhundov, 1812–78)’s “The Deceived Stars” [abbrev. *DS*] (*Setāregān-e ferib-khorde* / *Aldanmış Kāvakib, Hekayati-Yusif şah* / *Обманутые звёзды*) is from the middle of the nineteenth century (1857), i.e., the beginnings of reformism in the region; it can be considered as one of the earliest pieces of ‘modern’ Middle Eastern fiction in general;²³
- Muṣṭafā Luṭfī al-Manfalūṭī’s (1876–1924) “The Happy City” [*HC*] (*Madīnat al-sa‘āda*) was produced half a century later, in 1907, i.e., in a time when modernisation was already far advanced and the reform-minded effendis, the new secular-educated elite, had gained considerable self-confidence, but were still denied political participation; it is the early twentieth century, where the longing for radical change has intensified during the past decades but the melancholic *fin de siècle* mood is still prevailing and the longed-for

²² While positive utopias have become very rare in the West, the genre seems to re-emerge and blossom for some time, every now and then, in the Middle East. The recent utopia of the ‘Islamic State’ was preceded, in the 1990s, by utopias imagined by Islamist writers of the *adab islāmī* / *İslamī edebiyât* movement, cf. my essay “Islamist *belles lettres* – Bourgeois and Secular” (Guth 2006), with further references.

²³ Briefly on the author: *KLL*³ s.v. – Quite detailed CVs are available from the Russian and Azeri Wikipedia entries (“Ахундов, Мирза Фатали” and “Mirzə Fətəli Axundov”, respectively). – Unfortunately, the story of the “Deceived Stars” itself is not discussed in any of these references.

- radical social-political change still seems out of reach for many (although World War I, which will bring the collapse of the old empires, is close);²⁴
- in contrast, “Farahat’s Republic” [FR] (*Jumhūriyyat Faraḥāt*, 1954) by the Egyptian Yūsuf Idrīs (1927–1991), written again roughly half a century after al-Manfalūṭī’s “Happy City”, stems from the earliest years of the new Egyptian Republic, shortly after the take-over of the Free Officers and the “great leader”, Gamāl ‘Abd al-Nāṣir (Nasser), generally a period of euphoric optimism and belief in the feasibility of progress, but – as we will see – questioned as such by the writer.²⁵

Let us have a closer look now at the individual novellas!²⁶

17.3.1 Mirza Fatali Akhundov, “The Deceived Stars”

Ākhundzādeh/Akhundov’s “Deceived Stars” tells the story of the poor saddle-maker Yusof who, for a short time in the beginning of the sixteenth century, is put in the place of the Safavid Shah (who has been warned by his astrologers that a big calamity is to come over the one sitting on the Iranian throne); the idea is to save the real Shah and let the misfortune hit the saddle-maker, a simple and pious, but also very smart ‘man from the street’ of peasant origin, also known to be

²⁴ On the author: de Moor 1998a and, in some detail, Starkey 2010 and Pagani 2020. – *Madīnat al-sa‘āda* is treated briefly by Deheuvels (as “un petit texte fort curieux”) in id. 2007, 222–23, 226, and in Barbaro 2013, 47, as well as Pagani 2020. For more detailed studies, see Deheuvels 2004 and Lauri 2019. For the latter, “all the basic elements typical of the ‘Western’ utopian genre are present in [this] story” (123) and it seems to be “so prototypical at first reading that it could be taken as a writing exercise in the genre” (124). This is certainly true if one takes as basis for comparison Vieira’s description of “a literary tradition which [...] relies on a more or less rigid narrative structure: it normally pictures the journey (by sea, land or air) of a man or woman to an unknown place (an island, a country or a continent); once there, the utopian traveller is usually offered a guided tour of the society, and given an explanation of its social, political, economic and religious organization; this journey typically implies the return of the utopian traveller to his or her own country, in order to be able to take back the message that there are alternative and better ways of organizing society” – Vieira 2010, 7.

²⁵ For a concise overview of author’s life and work, cf., e.g., the entry “Yūsuf Idrīs” in www.britannica.com. For more detailed studies, see Ryberg 1992, with further references.

²⁶ Quotations will be in English, with inline page numbers referring to the respective translation’s reprint in my anthology, *Literary Visions* (Guth, ed. 2019), while the original text will be given in the footnotes, quoted from the editions indicated in the References. Abbreviations: *SFKh* = *Setāregān-e ferib-khordeh*, *MS* = *Madīnat al-sa‘āda*, *JF* = *Jumhūriyyat Faraḥāt* / *DS* = “The Deceived Stars”; *HC* = “The Happy City”; *FR* = “Farahat’s Republic”.

a critic of the shah and ‘the system’ of hypocrites and liars, etc. While the real Shah ‘Abbās I is in hiding, Yusof seizes the opportunity of his being the new emperor to abolish all that he thinks isn’t as it should be in the country. For a short time, he is able to establish just rule and do away with exploitation, poverty, religious constraints, unjust death sentences, torture, etc. He also reduces the palace’s expenses, distributes grain to the poor, abolishes bribing, establishes a just and meaningful system of taxation, creates secular courts (taking large parts of jurisdiction away from the mullahs), and has roads and bridges repaired, caravanserais, schools, and hospitals built and irrigation canals digged. However, when “a new golden era had (just) come to Iran” (DS 35), larger parts of the population, not accustomed to just and mild rule, mistake this for timidity and weakness on Yusof’s side. The monotony of well-being makes them think of further shortcomings, and soon a mutiny breaks out. As the expected calamity does not happen and Yusof stays alive, Shah ‘Abbās’s ex-entourage, all dismissed by Yusof, now join the “ungrateful urban rabble” (DS 37), march on the palace and take over again. Yusof has disappeared. The new old elite urge the previous ruler to leave his hideout, and Shah ‘Abbās is reinstalled. After only a short time, everything is as it was before, and “despotism, cruelty and fanaticism” (DS 38) remain unchallenged for the remaining fourty years of the Shah’s rule.

The text is set in the early sixteenth century and told from a third-person perspective as if the events had happened in real life. What does this and the type of utopian state that the text presents to its readers, tell us about the author’s approach to the modernisation project?

Firstly, we can say that we are still at the very initial stage of the reform project, a stage where the utopia of a radical change is still very idealistic and rather abstract – as readers, we do not get much more than a few slogans (of which “prosperity and modest well-being for everybody” perhaps are the most important alongside with the call for “justice”²⁷). Although it is presented as something that *had* been real for a short time in the past, the author does not seem to believe in the project’s *future* feasibility himself because he tells the story of a people that is not mature enough and, thus, time is not ripe yet. Evidently he is at a loss as to what else he could do than simply present an alternative system as something that once upon a time *had been* reality, for a short moment in history

27 For *‘adl* as the term that preceded that of *ḥurriyya* as a translation of the French *liberté* in early nineteenth century Arabic renderings and discussion of concepts of the French Revolution, cf. B. Lewis 1967/2012b (art. “Ḥurriyya”, in *IEI*²).

at least, but then everything returned to how it had been before.²⁸ As we have seen above (Introduction), utopia theory calls this a ‘spatial’ utopia that is not temporalised yet. The author does not assign his vision a place on a timeline of human progress and overall development, although he names a concrete period – early sixteenth century. At the same time, Akhundov’s *Deceived Stars* is also a utopia that does not show signs of subjectivation yet. The narrating subject has neither lived the “saddlemaker shah”’s ideal state himself nor does he tell the reader anything with regard to the effect that the knowledge about Yusof Shah’s interim rule made, or makes, on himself. The third-person narrator is (in Gérard Genette’s categorisation) a “heterodiegetic” instance here who is neither involved in the events himself nor would serve, with the help of free indirect style, as a focaliser of Yūsuf Shāh’s or some other protagonist’s subjective experience. Due to both, the lack of temporalisation and the lack of subjectivation, Akhundov’s utopia project therefore remains little concrete and little internalised – as if it were a mere experiment of thought, a nice and interesting story that is worth considering, but still not much more.²⁹

17.3.2 Muşṭafā L. al-Manfalūṭī, “The Happy City”

Things look different half a century later. In al-Manfalūṭī’s “Happy City”, the (first-person) author-narrator tells the reader about a beautiful dream he recently had:³⁰

²⁸ According to Wilpert 2001b, 866, utopias located in a distant past, even if clearly referring to the state of affairs prevailing in the author’s present, have a lower potential to arouse conflict with those in power.

²⁹ In this respect, *SFKh/DS* is similar to other utopian narratives with largely abstract ‘ideological-philosophical’ features, like, for example, Fransis Faṭḥallāḥ Marrāsh’s *Ghābat al-ḥaqq* (“The Forest of Truth”, 1865), characterised by Sadgrove 1998 as “a vision of a dream world, describing an ideal state of spiritual freedom in constant war with a kingdom of bondage; [...] a fantastic blend of European ideas (the advantages of peace, the importance of liberty and equality) and a personal Christian belief in universal love” (see also Deheuvels 2007, 221), or Farāḥ Anṭūn’s *al-Dīn wa-l-‘ilm wa-l-māl aw al-mudun al-thalāth* (“Religion, Science, and Money, or: The Three Cities”, 1903), termed a text uniting “discours idéologique, description du réel, [et] critique éthique de socio-politique” by Deheuvels (2007, 225), heavily influenced, among many other ideas, by freemasonic thought (cf. *ibid.*, 229).

³⁰ Deheuvels (2007, 225) holds that the “awakened sleeper” (*dormeur éveillé*) is a “veritable *topos*” of the literature of the period, a fact he sees directly related to the basic idea of the Naḥḍa itself, given that the term means “awakening, revival” (*éveil, renouveau*). The motif was already used more than forty years before al-Manfalūṭī by Marrāsh in his *Ghābat al-ḥaqq* (see n. 29). – The dream motif as such can be counted among the many “marked references to the Classical

One day, he – he himself (a first marker of a subjectivised approach³¹)! – traveled to a remote region, beyond a huge desert and high mountains, and was transported by a fabulous giant bird (reminding of the Rokh of the *1001 Nights*)³² to a place where he spotted “green-banked watercourses and clustering cottages beside great castles” (HC 79).³³ He descended from where the bird landed, and arrived in a city where everybody was happy³⁴ because everything – political system, distribution of resources and wealth, education, social cohesion, etc. – was organised completely differently from how it was done in the narrator’s home country, Egypt.³⁵ The protagonist is led around by a wise old man – looking “like the inhabitant of Mars of some astrological fantasy” (ibid.)³⁶ – who also explains to him the philosophy behind doing everything this way, not otherwise. As a reader, we do not only get these explanations but also, as a contrast, the narrator’s questions and comments, which, explicitly or implicitly, describe the corresponding deplorable state of affairs back home.³⁷ The narrator is especially impressed by the natural piety – the people are not Muslims, but “true monotheist”s (HC 80)³⁸ who

Arabic literary tradition” observed by Lauri 2019, 116 and 121 (and by others before him); see also section “Traditional Elements”, ibid., 124–25. – There do not seem to be any specific reflexes of Islamic(ate) *political* utopias; for the latter, see al-Azmeh 1990.

31 Deheuvels thinks that also the just mentioned motif of the dream that transports the narrator to a utopian place is in itself such an indicator of subjectivation because it connects “le destin individuel et celui des civilisations” – Deheuvels 2007, 225.

32 While the bird reminds of Rokh, the immense mountain is “easily recognizable as the liminal mountain of Qāf of the classical Islamicate tradition” – Lauri 2019, 123.

33 Translations by Nevill Barbour (see References, s.v. al-Manfalūṭī) are often quite free. Here, the original has: رأيت على البعد خطوط الخصرة حول سطور الماء ، ورأيت المنازل والقصور (MS 66).

34 On ‘happiness’ as a secular concept, cf. note 9, above.

35 The features that al-Manfalūṭī assigns to the ideal society of the Happy City are very much reminiscent of those of classical European ‘spatial’ utopias as described by Voßkamp 1996, 1933 f., e.g., a general community of property, totalitarian reign (as answer to anarchic chaos in the real world), or the rational(ist) character of the future system.

36 شيخ ... أشبه الأشياء بما يتخيله فريق الخياليين من علماء الفلك في صور سگان المریخ (MS 66). – For Deheuvels 2004, 357, this phrase is probably the earliest reference to ‘science fiction’ in Arabic literature. In line with this assumption, Lauri 2019, 125 thinks that it serves as “a marker that we are no longer in the realm of marvelous tales [evoked by the initial dream motif, the giant bird, and the huge mountain]. The ‘Martian’ appearance [...] introduces the second, longer utopian visit section, where more ‘modern’ utopian dimensions feature prominently”.

37 Cf. what has been said about the “front” and “reverse sides” of utopia in the first paragraph of this study.

38 الموحدين الصادقين (MS 67).

venerate God out of gratitude for what He grants them.³⁹ The guest realises that this simple but genuine and sincere way of believing and worshipping is very different from what he knows from the “learned theologians”, “philosophers” and “self-appointed mystics” (ibid.)⁴⁰ back home. On the guided tour through the city he cannot but repeat his admiration for this people’s achievements: “nicely planned” “broad streets”, “houses spaced without jostling”, each with “its own gay garden” (HC 81),⁴¹ et cetera. However, more than at the material achievements, the author-narrator marvels at the people’s general morale: they are very modest, “satisfied if they have a house to sleep in, enough land to support themselves and an animal to carry their heavy loads” (ibid.).⁴² Moreover, everybody works hard for the community’s benefit.⁴³ They receive education not in schools, but at home, at the workshops and on the field while living and working, which is also why the Happy City has “no science apart from practical activity” (HC 82).⁴⁴ In this society, there is no oppression and therefore no need to demand freedom either. Instead of a ruler, the inhabitants only need an arbitrator (ibid.)⁴⁵ and there is no need for a police because, as the guide explains, “we are all his (i.e., the arbitrator’s) police”⁴⁶ and his staff in so far as he has need of us to enforce his decisions” (ibid.); the community can also do without prisons because criminals

39 For more on al-Manfalūṭī’s depiction of the ideal religion, cf. Lauri 2019, 126-8, with further references.

40 In detail, the original has: والْمَدِّيُّ وَالْوُدِّيُّ ، الفقهاء الذين ينفقون أعمارهم في الحيز والاستحاضة ، والحدث الأكبر والحدث الأصغر ، و(...)الكلاميين الذين يسهرون الليالي ويقرّحون المآقي في عينيّة الصفات ، والجوهر والعرض ، والحدث والقدم ، والدور والتسلسل ، و(...) المتصوّفة الذين يحاولون أن ينازعوا وغيريتها ، (...) الله في مشيئته ويجاذبوه قدرته ويغالّبوه على أمره ونهيه ويتزاحمونه في لوحه وقلمه ، (MS 67).

41 فرأيت شوارعها فسيحة منتظمة ، ومنازلها متفرقة غير متلاصقة ، وقد أحاط بكلّ منزل منها حديقة زاهرة (MS 67). – Lauri 2019, 128 thinks “the reader would think of a modern-looking grid city. Manfaluti may have had in mind the urban renovation of Downtown Cairo under Khedive Ismā‘il, modeled upon Haussman’s Paris [as suggested by Deheuvels 2004, 362]”.

42 حسب الرجل مَنّا بيتٌ يأوي إليه ومزرعة يستغلّها ودابة تحمل أثقاله (MS 67).

43 Deheuvels 2007, 226 speaks of “une organisation socio-économique égalitariste”. Lauri 2019, 131, too, notices the “deeply egalitarian” character of al-Manfalūṭī’s utopian society and agrees with Pagani 2020 and Deheuvels in that this may be a reflex of European utopian socialism (Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Robert Owen, etc.). On the latter’s “euchronia”, cf., e.g., Vieira 2010, 12.

44 إنّا لا نعرف علما غير العمل (MS 68). – For Deheuvels 2007, 226, the educational system is “assez ‘rousseauiste’”. – Cf. also Lauri 2019, 129, who describes it as “eminently empirical and practical in focus, aiming at productive work”.

45 لنا حكم لا حاكم (MS 68). – On al-Manfalūṭī’s ideas about governance, cf. Lauri 2019, 130-32.

46 كلنا جنده (MS 68).

are “sufficiently punished by public opinion and the blame of the rest” (ibid.).⁴⁷ When the narrator and his guide have finished their tour through the Happy City, the narrator lies down to sleep – only to awake again at home, in Egypt, lamenting the fact that the here-and-now is so different from what he has just seen in his dream.

As already indicated above, this novella shows very clear signs of an increased subjectivation. The narrating subject – now significantly a first-person narrator – presents the *journey* through the Happy City as his own experience:⁴⁸ although it was only a dream, he, the *homodiegetic* narrator, travelled there and saw everything in this dream *himself*, walked around in the city with his own body and built up an active and rather concrete relation to the alternative model by *asking questions* to his guide and *comparing* the ideal he saw to the far-from-ideal contemporary Egypt he comes from. Through this dialogic approach,⁴⁹ also the subject’s *reasoning* activity is underlined.⁵⁰ Yet, although there is subjectivation and concreteness – which is generally interpreted as an indicator of an increased internalisation of the project of modernity by the Middle Eastern subject (see above) – there is still, like in Akhundov’s *Deceived Stars*, no temporalisation yet.⁵¹ Al-Manfalūṭī’s utopia presents the ideal world as existing in another place (far behind the desert and a high mountain chain), but although it is not located in the past (as Akhundov’s “saddlemaker” state) but in the author’s present, it still lacks the idea of *perfectibility*; it imagines a society in the state of *perfection*,

47 حسب المجرم عندنا عقوبة أن يتفق أهل المدينة على احتقاره والزراية به ، وإن أحداً ليؤثر أن يتخطفه (MS 68). الطير ، أو يسقط هليه كسف من السماء قبل أن يرى نفسه بغياً إلى قومه صغيراً

48 The travel motif – a marker of a subjectivised utopia, as we saw – is identified by Deheuvels as a typical feature of “plusieurs de ces textes [utopiques de la Nahḍa]”. Like Marrāsh’s *Ghābat al-ḥaqq*, al-Manfalūṭī’s *Madīnat al-sa’āda*, or Faraḥ Anṭūn’s *al-Dīn wa-l-‘ilm wa-l-māl* (see n. 29, above), all of them combine “récit de voyage jusqu’à une zone où [...] le protagoniste parvient en une terre inconnue dont il décrit la population et le système de société qui le caractérise” – Deheuvels 2007, 226.

49 The “dialogic structure” as an important element of the “narrative sequence” is observed also by Lauri 2019, 124.

50 With this, al-Manfalūṭī’s *Madīnat al-sa’āda* shows clear similarity to utopias from European Enlightenment, cf. Wilpert 2001b, 866.

51 Nor does al-Manfalūṭī’s utopia exhibit all the features that may be realised in subjectivised spatial utopias. Unlike Defoe’s Robinson, for example, al-Manfalūṭī’s protagonist is not very active: he simply walks around, observes, and talks to the sheikh. In contrast, Robinson has to make an effort to *survive*, then *creates* his own new world, *re-establishes* order after the chaos of shipwrecking, etc. The only *process* that is described in *The Happy City* is that of travelling (or rather passive voice: being transported) there and intellectually appropriating it by asking questions, receiving answers and commenting on these. Thus, while the individual in Defoe’s novel is a “Subjekt der Geschichte”, al-Manfalūṭī’s protagonist is no such shaper of history yet.

but it does not give the reader a hint as to whether there is a chance that contemporary Egyptian society one day may reach the same level of happiness, and if so, *how* one may get there: it is highly significant that, according to the story, the only way of being transported from the here-and-now to the idyllic⁵² ideal state is by *dream* and, within the dream, with the help of a *fantastic* bird!⁵³

17.3.3 Yūsuf Idrīs, “Farahat’s Republic”

Another forty years later, in “Farahat’s Republic” by Yūsuf Idrīs, we can observe another stage in the development of the genre (and, concomitantly, of the Middle Easterners’ attitude to the modernist project). While Akhundov’s *Deceived Stars* and al-Manfalūṭī’s *Happy City* still present their alternative societies as something desirable, i.e., as positive utopias, Yūsuf Idrīs’s story marks a point of transition between utopia and dystopia, and with dystopia to a rather skeptical, if not even pessimistic view of the modernisation project.⁵⁴ This is clearly reflected in narrative structure. While the two earlier examples were rather ‘simple’, straight-forward narratives, *Farahat’s Republic* is of a much higher complexity. In the story, the vision of an ideal “republic” (*jumhūriyya*) that a petty police officer named Faraḥāt has put down in form of a film script is *embedded*, as a story-within-the-story, in a description of everyday routine at a police station in a popular quarter of a larger city, probably Cairo. Sergeant-Major Faraḥāt is annoyed by having to deal with petty criminals and the complaints of so many people whom he all considers uncivilised and whose causes he tends to regard as fake or pointless. The scene and Faraḥāt’s interaction with the clients are observed and described from

52 With this feature, al-Manfalūṭī’s text comes close to the anacreontic utopias that flourished during the European 18th century as “escapist” imaginations of a better world (Wilpert 2001b, 866b, speaks of utopian “Fluchtwelten”) for an emerging, but politically still powerless bourgeoisie. The situation of the Arab *efendiyya* on the eve of the First World War obviously was similar.

53 Deheuvels 2004, 363, even went as far as calling *Madīnat al-sa’āda* a “regressive utopia” (though for different reasons: for him, not the lack of temporalisation is decisive but the author’s “clinging to pre-modern models” which makes it lose “its force as an agent of critical reflection and change”, as Lauri 2019, 124, summarizes Deheuvels’ view. I agree with Lauri in rejecting the idea of a quasi-nostalgic “regressiveness”; at the same time, I see that al-Manfalūṭī’s utopia lacks the dynamics of a temporalised approach. In my view, it is this lack, rather than the author’s references to the classical tradition, that produces the “unrealistic tone” that one may get “at a first reading” (as Lauri 2019, 132 has it). Thus, unlike in the “allotopias” of the classical tradition where the imagined other world is just marvelous, full of wonders (see above, p. 378 with fn. 5), in *MS/HC* there is clearly a tension of political-social relevance between the depicted ideal and lived reality.

54 Cf., however, Ryberg 1992 with a rather different reading, cf. esp. 67 and 139–42.

the perspective of a first-person narrator, evidently a leftist intellectual (an alter ego of the author?⁵⁵) and temporarily detained himself. The narrator manages to draw Farahāt into a conversation, in the course of which the latter begins to tell him about the film scenario he has written:

One day, a poor but upright Egyptian is rewarded by a super-rich Indian tourist for his unusual honesty: he has returned to the Indian owner a precious diamond which the latter had lost in the street. The Egyptian is too modest to accept money in reward, so the Indian buys him a lottery ticket. Thanks to this ticket, the Egyptian becomes a millionaire. He invests the money into profitable enterprises – first a cargo boat, then two ships, and so on, constantly enlarging his economic ‘empire’ – , ending up as the owner of “all the factories in Egypt” (FR 214)⁵⁶ and an employer of millions of fellow-countrymen. He provides housing for the workers – “real homes [...] with gardens and balconies and everything laid on – chicken coops, rabbit hutches, the lot” (FR 215)⁵⁷ – and pays them justly, so that everybody also can afford decent clothing and enjoy the many facilities of the work-and-live complexes the Egyptian creates: cafés, parks, cinemas, etc. “As for police, there weren’t any – just a constable who [...] would have a kiosk all made of glass, [...] and a small office” (ibid.).⁵⁸ The wealthier the owner gets the more he also invests into modern machines, which gradually take over most of the physically exhausting work in factories or in the fields – irrigation, threshing, fertilising, cotton gathering... Electricity is introduced everywhere, and infrastructure constantly improved and expanded and schools provided for learning “to read and write and [...] get to know (one’s) rights and duties” (FR 216).⁵⁹ After a certain time, however, he loses interest in his modernisation project and gets bored with it. Consequently, one day he announces, over his own radio station, that “he was giving it all up” (ibid.).⁶⁰ Here, the narrative returns to the here-and-now, letting both the first-person narrator as well as the reader without a clue as to how the script may end and the further future look like.

55 Ryberg thinks that revolutionary intellectuals in Idrīs’s stories usually are “Projektionsfiguren des Autors” – Ryberg 1992, 120.

56 المهم إنه جه يوم عليه امتلك فيه مصانع مصر كلها (JF 23).

57 سكن ... بيت ... بجنينة بيلكونة وحاوي مما جميعه حتى فيه عيش الفراخ والأرانب ومش بس كده كان (ibid.). ما يخدش من عرق العامل حاجة

58 ...وبوليس مفيش بوليس ... العسكري ... له كش قزاز في قزازة في وسط الشارع ، ومكتب صغير (ibid.).

59 يقرأوا ويكتبوا ويعرفوا اللي لهم من اللي عليهم (JF 24).

60 أعلن في المكرفون أنه متنازل عن جميع (ibid.). – In Ryberg’s reading this means that he transferred his property and sovereignty to the people (“Zu guter Letzt tritt der großkapitalistische Wohltäter, seines Reichtums plötzlich überdrüssig, seinen gesamten Besitz an das Volk ab”, Ryberg 1992, 96).

In this story, which, as mentioned above, was published shortly after Gamāl ‘Abd al-Nāṣir had started to work on the realisation of his vision of a new Egypt, we have, for the first time in our collection of sample utopias, a temporalised utopia:⁶¹ the “republic” that the petty police officer Faraḥāt sketches in his film scenario is not only shown in its perfection but also in its perfectibility in that it describes, step by step, the way how Egypt one day (in the future) might reach such a state of perfection – the idea is that, yes, it *would* need some start-up help, but as soon as such a grant would be at a smart, benevolent and patriotic entrepreneur’s disposal it would almost be a self-propelling thing. As in the other two utopias, the main goal is economic prosperity and everybody’s well-being and, hence, happiness, achieved through a just and equal distribution of wealth and the modesty of both the ruler and the ideal state’s subjects.⁶² Given the story’s date of publication, it is quite safe to assume that Faraḥāt’s utopian republic actually is meant to mirror ‘Abd al-Nāṣir’s idealistic vision of an Arab socialism,⁶³ and it is highly significant that subjectivation in this story is not achieved, as in al-Manfalūṭī’s case, through a first-person narrator who experiences the ideal state himself; rather, Faraḥāt tells the story of Egypt’s quick and comprehensive modernisation under the leadership of a benevolent ruler from a third-person perspective so that the utopia itself remains largely vague and unspecific and is not experienced by a contemporary subject (although the protagonist of the

61 Due to limitations of space, Faraḥ Anṭūn’s voluminous *al-Dīn wa-l-‘ilm wa-l-māl* of 1903 (see above, n. 29) is not included in the present overview. Had it been included, it would have taken the position between al-Manfalūṭī and Idrīs because, typologically, the novel belongs to the group of temporalised utopias. It displays a – as Deheuvels (2007, 228) calls it – “tendance millénariste” in that it builds on a 3-stage model of history (Golden Age > Decay > Reconstruction, in this case building an ideal socialist society), and the last stage is set in the future where the main hero arrives from the actual present. The whole narrative also bears the imprint of freemasonic thinking, a fact that is mirrored not only in the symbol of the destroyed and re-erected Temple, but also in the novel’s topography where the three cities of Religion, Science and Money are situated at the edges of a triangle with, at its centre, a garden containing the statue of the founder of the original, once harmoniously united city, shaykh Sulaymān (= Solomon!), a topography that mirrors the freemasonic triangle with the all-seeing eye of God (the Eye of Providence) in its centre.

62 With these features (order, manageability, elimination of incalculability, security of projected life-trajectories under the conditions of an equally distributed common wealth, etc.), Faraḥāt’s ideas about human happiness resemble very much those of the early, ‘spatial’ utopias in Europe – Voßkamp 1996, 1936, speaks of the “static ‘happy order’ of disciplined subjects” (das statische Ordnungsglück disziplinierter Subjekte).

63 Cf. also the fact that Faraḥāt (like Nasser) comes from Upper Egypt and that he has (like Nasser) a big nose (“I saw him then purely as Upper Egyptian: a nose as big as that of Ramesses”, *JF* 13/ *FR* 205).

story-within-the-story, the benevolent Egyptian, clearly is more active than al-Manfalūṭī's narrator and definitely could qualify as a "Subjekt der Geschichte"⁶⁴ – yet, we do not get *his* first-person narrative...). In contrast, what is subjectivised is the experience of *listening* to Farahāt's *telling about* his utopia – this is what the imprisoned intellectual and first-person narrator has to deal with at the police station. So here, the subject's engagement is with the *narrative about* the utopian vision, not the utopia itself. The fact that the author, Yūsuf Idrīs, lets Farahāt tell his highly naive and idealistic story in a setting that is absolutely contrary to the officer's imagined future world creates a sharp – almost tragic – ironic contrast which, we can assume, was meant as a critical questioning, or even ridiculing, of Nasser's way of telling people stories about a better future.⁶⁵ From the intellectual first-person narrator's perspective, the transition from the actual state of affairs to a better future remains completely unclear: in *Farahāt's* vision, the utopia is already temporalised; the *intellectual individual*, however, experiences the transition as un-mediated by concrete steps of gradual perfection: like in al-Manfalūṭī's story, he is being transported from the ugly here-and-now to an ideal state only by means of a dream or, in this case, a film scenario, i.e., a fictional account. Therefore, the meta-perspective Yūsuf Idrīs introduces in this story pinpoints essential deficits in 'Abd al-Nāṣir's modernisation project: the author makes clear that this project is highly naive and vague, and although it pretends to follow a plan of development it actually is nothing but an unrealistic dream.

17.4 Conclusion

In the history of the utopian/dystopic genre outlined above, the critical questioning of utopian visions can be considered a first step in the transition from utopia to dystopia. In Europe, the first signs of this shift become visible in the last third of the eighteenth century already, while the massive break-through of dystopia happens only more than half a century later when the widespread belief in 'easy', linear progress is lost in the course of massive industrialisation and concomitant

⁶⁴ See above, note 51.

⁶⁵ Although the contrast is noted also by Ryberg 1992, 140, it does not affect her reading of *JF/FR* as an expression of the author's belief that a harmonious, egalitarian, 'socialist' society was feasible and 'Paradise on earth' soon could be hoped for (*ibid.*, 67, 96). In a similar vein, Ryberg observes that, as part of the state's system of repression ("Teil des staatlichen Repressionsapparats"), Farahāt (like the cruel torturer in *al-ʿAskārī al-aswad* "The Black Soldier", 1961) is a rather negative protagonist; nevertheless, she thinks that the sergeant's naïve utopia corresponds to a 'romantic socialist' (140) optimism on the author's side.

misery etc. In the Middle East, corresponding disastrous experiences that completed the early doubts in the modernisation project seem to have been especially the shock of the lost June 1967 war, the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war, the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and the Israeli invasion in Beirut, etc. Since then, like in the West, dystopia seems to prevail.

In spite of the overall trend, however, more optimistic utopia has not completely died out and is reemerging every now and then under certain conditions.⁶⁶ The latest case seems to have been the vision of an Islamic State that militant groups sought to establish in the Middle East. Their vision was preceded by that of less violent Islamist activists, such as the Turk Ali Nar, during the 1990s President of the “World League of Islamic Literature”,⁶⁷ or Islamist women’s literature, etc.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Cf., e.g., Szyska 1995 on utopian writing in Nasserist prison and laicist Turkey.

⁶⁷ On his utopian novel “The Bee Island” (*Anlar Ülkesi*, 1994), cf. my own study, Guth 2006.

⁶⁸ Cf., e.g., Furrer 1997 and 2001.

Part VII: **Turkish parallels**

18 The ‘riddle’ ‘*Aşk-ı memnū*’

Towards assigning the *Şervet-i Fünūn* movement a place in literary history

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This chapter: Along with Chapter 15, this and the following chapter form a unit as they center around individual *Turkish* texts. While Turkish parallels have been referenced or discussed *en passant* in many earlier chapters, this chapter also re-connects to what has been said so far about nineteenth century “Reproductionism” (cf. especially introductory sections to Chapters 4 and 9). However, as an essay on the problem of periodisation of Middle Eastern literature (already touched upon earlier in this book, cf. in particular Chapter 2), it is originally concerned, in the first place, with assigning one of the masterpieces from the pen of a member of the *Şervet-i Fünūn* group, Ḥalid Ziyā (Uşaklıgil)’s famous ‘*Aşk-ı memnū*’ (“Forbidden Love”, 1897–98), a place in literary history. Where then is the link to ‘emerging subjectivity’, the main topic of this book?

We have already seen on several occasions that the main driving force in “Reproductionist” texts was the *individual* subject’s aspiration to establish for him-/herself a new, more humane way of life and thereby transcend the constraints of the traditional order of things with its many rules and dated laws. We will meet this same impulse – the “Potentiality” component of “Reproductionist” texts – again in ‘*Aşk-ı memnū*’. However, we will also observe that despite the efforts of individual subjects to instigate renewal, they ultimately fail to effect *substantial, transformative* changes. Their achievements are confined to *individualised* reproductions (a typical marker of the “Resultative” component in “Reproductionism”) of the existing order (“Actuality” component), leaving the essence of the traditional framework intact. Nonetheless, these subjects will have made a step in the direction of the next period and thus left an indelible mark.

Walter Falk posits that the pinnacle of ‘global’ “Reproductionism” occurred between 1820 and 1880. However, the persistence of a “Reproductionist” worldview in ‘*Aşk-ı memnū*’, likely composed in the early 1890s, provides valuable insights into the enduring influence of the old order of things in late Ottoman Turkey and the prevailing societal experiences of that era. This novel serves as a poignant illustration of how deeply individuals still remained affected, towards the *fin de siècle*, by their inability to effect fundamental changes. In the Arab(ic)

context, we have previously encountered a ‘flood of tears’ (cf. especially Chapter 11) that certainly can be associated with “Reproductionist” pessimism. However, while this lachrymosity often also exhibits “Creativist” traits in that it tends to carry elements of comforting optimism by simultaneously producing strong visions of a better world, this dimension is still largely absent from *‘Aşk-ı memnû’*. Despite its highly emotional tone, the novel lacks sentimentalism or excessive tearfulness. Instead, it presents the tragedy of existence as a scientifically established fact – an inevitable, predetermined destiny that can be understood and explained with the help of the subject’s sharp intellect, of Reason, as the result of genetic determinism. Consequently, social critique, anti-Westernisation sentiments, or moralistic undertones are conspicuously absent from the narrative, as they would be futile in the face of the persistence of the old order of things. Instead, the author underlines the aspect of *tragedy*, and he does so from the perspective of the human being, the suffering *subject* (i.e., the perspective of “Reproductionism’s” potentiality component).

This essay contends that *‘Aşk-ı memnû’* belongs to a late stage of “Reproductionism”, one that places “the heart”, i.e., the feeling subject, at its core. The prevailing condition is experienced as heart-*destroying*, with the individual longing for anything that may help to *bear* and *support* his/her heart, his/her humanity; only to find out that, in the end, the world is heart-*less* and *devoid* of compassion. We become witnesses of a worldview centered on the objective external world’s impact on the inner world of the subject, with the essence of human existence in this *fin-de-siècle* work encapsulated by the feeling heart itself.

* * *

18.1 Divergent interpretations

Critics agree that Uşaklıgil’s best work is *Aşk-ı Memnu*; surprisingly, however, opinions are divided concerning the novel’s overarching message or lack thereof. Some [scholars, readers] perceive the central theme of the novel [...] revolving around Bihter’s forbidden love. [...] According to L. S. Akalın, “*Aşk-ı Memnu* narrates a love thwarted by societal conventions and legal constraints, originating from a marriage founded [solely] on materialistic grounds.”[a] Alternatively, according to Cemil Yener, the novel asserts that “wealth cannot make a young woman forget her need for love. A man who marries a much younger woman should anticipate betrayal.”[b] Similarly, Dr. ÖnerToy asserts that the author delves into “marital discord stemming from disparities between a man and the woman he married, and showed the changes in the understanding of Westernisation [...]”[c]

Conversely, other critics challenge the notion of Bihter’s love as the central motif. Cevdet Kudret emphasises another aspect, positing that the novel “chronicles the lives of a handful of people consumed by love, who live without having to work [...] and are

addicted to an *alafranga* lifestyle”. [d] According to Rauf Mutluay, *Aşk-ı Memnu* reflects “the problems of our society, a society that is going through a crisis of Westernisation; [it shows] the desperate resistance of traditional values, the pitfalls of seducing a wealth-obsessed woman, and the conflict of our wavering moral standards”, albeit subtly concealed within the narrative [...]” [e] Conversely, Fethi Naci dismisses the idea of a didactic purpose behind the novel, asserting that Halit Ziya crafted it merely [...] “to tell [the stories of] a handful of people”. [f]¹

(Moran 1983/1990, 69)

This is how Berna Moran summarises the state of research on ‘*Aşk-ı memnû*’ in 1983, in the first volume of his seminal study “A critical look into the Turkish novel” (*Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış*), highlighting the puzzling disagreement among literary scholars regarding Halit Ziya’s intended message in this novel. Moran aptly notes the peculiarity of this scholarly discord, given the prominence of the work and the extensive commentary it has garnered.

Despite his comprehensive analysis, Moran himself acknowledges his inability to unravel this literary ‘riddle’. Unlike the early Fethi Naci, according to whom Uşaklıgil simply wanted to tell an informal, entertaining narrative, Moran suggests that the novel does indeed aspire to convey a profound message. However, he contends that there is not only one such unified overall message, but rather two basic readings, and the question cannot be answered because these two ultimately contradict each other. Through the novel runs a big rift, he says, a rift for which the author’s ambivalence and wavering between two diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive conceptions is responsible.

Moran compellingly argues that, on one hand, *Aşk-ı Memnu* portrays a tragedy, the *tragedy of Bihter*. Despite her initial aspirations to fulfill her roles as a dutiful wife and stepmother, Bihter finds herself ensnared by the overpowering forces of heredity, compelling her to emulate her ‘immoral’ mother, Firdevs Hanım, against her own volition (cf. Moran 1983/1990, 73–75).² Moran convincingly refutes interpretations that hold Bihter guilty for the disastrous course of

¹ On *Aşk-ı Memnu*, cf. in particular *ibid.*, part VI, pp. 68–86. – In the above citation, Moran refers to: [a] L. S. Akalin, *Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil* ([İstanbul:] Varlık Yayınları, 1953), 24; [b] Cemil Yener, *Bir Romancının Dünyası ve Romanlarındaki Dünya* ([İstanbul: ?], 1959), 33–4; [c] Olcay Öner, *Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, Romancılığı ve Romanımızdaki Yeri* ([Ankara:] Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Yayınları, 1965), 67; [d] Cevdet Kudret, *Türk Edebiyatında Hikâye ve Roman* ([İstanbul:] Varlık Yayınları, 1965), vol. I, 165; [e] Rauf Mutluay, *Ondokuzuncu Yüzyıl Türk Edebiyatı*, ([?:] Gerçek Yayınevi, 1970), 208; [f] Fethi Naci, *On Türk Romanı*, ([?:] Ok Yayınları, 1971), 12–3. In the edition I am using, Moran adds in a note that Fethi Naci, in his later *Türkiye’de Roman ve Toplumsal Değişme*, modified the view expressed in the earlier study; however, the opinion expressed in the later statement is not new for the state of research in 1983.

² A similar view about Bihter is expressed also by Finn 1978/84, 176–208, see esp. 179 ff.

events. Probably under the influence of European Naturalism and its emphasis on genetic determinism, Uşaklıgil rather must have seen Bihter as an innocent victim of the sexual instincts inherited from her mother (Moran 1983/1990, 78).³

On the other hand, Moran continues, there is the story of *Nihal* and her gradual *isolation*. When examined as a storyline of its own, independent of the Bihter plot, *Aşk-ı Memnu* must be read as a *bildungsroman*:

Nihal undergoes a transformation from childhood to adulthood, changing from the state of naïvety [*basitlik*] to one of maturity. Through this evolution, punctuated by painful experiences, she gains deeper insights into human nature and life itself, ascending to a higher level of consciousness.

(Moran 1983/1990, 80)

Moran grapples with the integration of Bihter's tragedy within the *bildungsroman* framework centered around Nihal. He is unable to reconcile the two storylines and can only speculate that Uşaklıgil initially conceived the novel solely as a tragedy centered on Bihter. However, during the writing process, Moran suggests, Uşaklıgil may have developed a heightened interest in Nihal, originally envisioned as a secondary character (cf. *ibid.*, 81). (Moran does not ask himself, though, what may have motivated the author to weave the story of a second character into the Bihter plot, given that he actually had *Bihter's* tragedy in mind...)⁴

Moreover, according to Moran, the two storylines not only lack coherence but also exhibit almost diametric opposition. Nihal's trajectory, on the one hand, follows the universal pattern of "birth – death – rebirth" or "paradise – trial [through life] – return to paradise" (Moran 1983/1990, 8). Initially, Nihal experiences an "innocent and blissful" existence in Adnan Bey's *yalı*. However, with the arrival of the "Melih Bey gang", "sin and sexuality" disrupt the idyllic scene, ushering in a phase of "trial" marked by "forbidden love, jealousy and enmity". Ultimately, the narrative concludes with a restoration of the initial paradise. While Moran perceives *Aşk-ı Memnu* as a tale with a favorable outcome for Nihal, it simultaneously assumes a melancholic tone due to Bihter's tragic demise (cf. *ibid.*, 81–2).

³ Also Finn 1978/84, 180, holds: "Bihter's adultery stems more from an inherited weakness than from a conscious decision. She is her mother's daughter, and when she gives herself to Behlül, she is driven by instinct."

⁴ For Moran's *bildungsroman* thesis, cf. also Sagaster-Jurado 1995, 171, who, like Finn, sees Nihal as an "eternal child" and concludes: "Nihal macht keine Entwicklung durch, die sie im positiven Sinne reifen ließe, wie es für die Heldin eines Bildungsromanes der Fall sein müßte" (Nihal does not undergo any development that would make her mature in a positive sense, as should be the case for the heroine of a *Bildungsroman*). – I agree with this reading.

The fact that Moran, despite his sharp and exhaustive analysis, fails to resolve the ‘riddle’ he presents can be attributed to certain shortcomings in his assessment. One such flaw is evident in his alignment of Nihal’s storyline with the “Paradise – Trial – Return to Paradise” pattern. Robert P. Finn (of whose work Moran appears to be unaware)⁵ convincingly argues against the existence of a paradisiacal state at Adnan Bey’s *yalı*, neither at the outset nor at the denouement of *Aşk-ı Memnu* (cf. Finn 1978/84, 186). On the contrary:

... her [sc. Nihal’s] relationship with her father, which contains “incestuous” elements, is in no way more honourable in the eyes of society than Bihter’s relationship with Behlül; in some respects it is even more “disgracing”. [...] Nihal’s relationship with her father is not directly sexual, but the bond between them is extremely intense.

(ibid.)

So, this can by no means be called a state of “innocence”. Moran’s misinterpretation stems from his detachment of the Nihal plot from the overall context and an over-reliance on Nihal’s perspective. While Nihal, as a motherless little girl, may experience her close bond with her father as a form of paradise, this interpretation disregards Adnan Bey’s viewpoint. For him, the situation is far from paradisiacal; rather, it represents a life of constant sacrifice, devoid of personal happiness. Considering the societal norms prevalent at the turn of the century, as noted by Finn, it is plausible that Uşaklıgil intended the initial setting to be more akin to a “hell”. This notion is reinforced by the novel’s conclusion, where father and daughter are depicted as even more closely intertwined, solidifying the undesirable state Adnan sought to escape – last sentence: “*Birlikte, hep birlikte. Yaşarken ve ölürken...*” (Together, forever together. In life and in death...)! If life is to be “a feast for all eternity” (Uşaklıgil 1993, 394) after father and daughter are reunited, two things should not be overlooked: (1) Immediately following is the sentence “Only Beşir was missing”. This is of utmost importance, as the potentially ‘paradisiacal’ reunion of father and daughter is juxtaposed here by an allusion to the death of the innocent little slave, which thus casts a dark shadow over any notion of “festive” bliss (cf. Sagaster-Jurado 1995, 171). – (2) Furthermore, one page later the text leaves father and daughter standing exactly at the same place – on a precipice! – where the romantic love scene between Behlül and Nihal had previously taken place, and at this point, Nihal says to her father exactly what Behlül had previously whispered in her ears. The structural parallelism thus clearly suggests (as already noticed by

⁵ The Turkish translation (1984) of Finn’s dissertation of 1978 could have provided additional insights if it had been incorporated into later editions of Moran’s work.

Finn 1978/84, 193) that the father has now taken the place of the lover and, conversely, Nihal has occupied the position of Adnan’s deceased wife, and for good. – Therefore, in light of these considerations, the only element that we may retain from Moran’s “myth” theory is its basic structure: an initial state, which still seemed to carry the moment of possible changeability, is solidified forever towards the end.

If neither the beginning nor the end refer to a state of paradise but rather to a quasi-incestuous relationship that is morally extremely questionable from the perspective of the late nineteenth century, we must assume that the title “Forbidden Love” encompasses not only Bihter and Behlul but also the relationship between Nihal and her father Adnan. Unlike Moran, who struggles to reconcile the Bihter and Nihal plots, we can discern a fundamental similarity between the two, suggesting a unified thematic statement within the novel. This convergence of narratives supports the coherence of the overall message, rendering a unified interpretation more plausible.⁶

18.2 Component analysis

An analytical tool that offers a valuable framework for discovering equidirectional tendencies in a plot and determining the overarching meaning of a fictional narrative is the so-called “Component Analysis”, developed by the late Walter Falk, formerly professor of German Literature at the University of Marburg, Germany.⁷ The basic assumption of this method is that the overall meaning of any literary work can be deconstructed into three interrelated components: a Potentiality component (PC), an Actuality component (AC), and a Resultativity component (RC). In the component-analytical work on a given text, the elements of its content are broken down “into a multitude of individual complexes of meaning, each of which can be understood as a specification of what is said in a more general way in one of the component titles” (Falk 1983, 24). In assigning the various elements of a narrative to either the PC, AC, or RC, the researchers let him/herself be guided by the definition of the components: the AC designates the realm of *existing reality* and “has the character of a *self-contained system, tending towards self-stabilisation*”; the PC, on the other hand, can be described as the ensemble of forces that “*have not yet realised themselves, but are pushing towards*

⁶ For Sagaster-Jurado’s reading, in which the eunuch Beşir is assigned a key role for the overall interpretation, cf. below, note 10.

⁷ In the following, my reference is Falk 1983.

realisation. These innovative impulses represent a *complex of possibility*" (cf. *ibid.*, 70; my italics). When AC and PC meet and interact, producing a certain result (which then manifests itself in the RC), one of the two components always functions as a 'trigger' for the emergence of the other, i.e., it has the character of the "logically (not necessarily temporally) earlier" element (*ibid.*, 183). Falk calls this 'trigger' function "priority" and speaks of "Actuality priority" and "Potentiality priority".

Finn's observation regarding Bihter and Nihal's shared desire for love can serve as a convenient starting point for identifying the three main components of the novel's overall semantics. Finn noticed that Bihter and Nihal are opponents precisely because they want more or less the same – consequently, they *do* have something in common in which they are alike, despite the different outcomes of the efforts they make. It is obvious that this is the – almost excessive – desire to be loved (cf. Finn 1978/84, 186, 189, 195). In both cases, the desire for love stems from a longing to overcome the present life, a life perceived as a state of non-life. Similar observations can be made regarding Adnan and Firdevs and, later, even Behlul. In all these cases, the longing for emotional fulfilment constitutes the Potentiality component: it usually has dreamlike features and is an idea of happiness that compels them all, again and again, to disrupt the existing order in pursuit of their aspirations (as the forces of Potentiality components typically do).

Conversely, the characters' experiences of dissatisfaction and yearning reflect the Actuality component. In the novel, it appears to many characters as determined by Nature (genetically inherited).

To further illustrate the above, and the componential-analytical approach in general, I have labelled some textual elements as belonging to either the Actuality or Potentiality components (abbreviated "AC" and "PC"):

Adnan Bey seeks marriage as a means to escape a life marked by sacrifice – sacrifice for his sick first wife, then for his children, especially Nihal; he feels that he has had nothing from life so far (AC). Therefore he hopes to be able to change the situation by marrying (PC). – Bihter, too, at first hopes to escape, via her marriage to Adnan, a situation of which she almost despairs, given that she is the daughter of a woman of such dubious reputation as Firdevs and that there is hardly any chance for her to "become happy" (AC). In the beginning, she thinks the only way for her to reach some kind of happiness may be the acquisition of material goods (PC). At a later point, the same process is repeated in a slightly modified way when she realises, after a year of being married to Adnan, that she still will not experience happiness, despite all wealth and luxury. Again, she believes that she has not yet lived a true life⁸ (AC). At

⁸ Cf. Finn's remark (*ibid.*, 185): "She [i.e., Bihter] perceives of her marriage as a failure and sees her life as an 'empty black abyss' [...]. [...] Bihter's life is dominated by emptiness [*boşluk*]. This emptiness as well as the Hunger [*açlık*] caused by it [...]" etc.

this moment, hope of perhaps being granted real life and happiness shines through again in her passionate relationship with Behlül⁹ (PC). – Similarly Behlül: he has such insights relatively late; nevertheless, recapitulating his previous life already during his time with Bihter, he finds that he has done something wrong (AC) – as can be seen from the fact that he changes his way of life, becomes a “monk” and sees in Bihter a woman who is different from all his previous acquaintances (PC). Like Bihter who got ‘bored’ with Adnan after a while, Behlül too soon realises that the dream of a fulfilled life with Bihter alone was an illusion – over time, it becomes too monotonous for him, and Bihter too possessive (AC). Therefore he, too, subsequently makes a ‘second attempt’, this time with Nihal. And again, now even more clearly and resolutely, he realises that his earlier life has not been a true life at all and that he has never experienced what he actually needed: not such a ‘prosaic’ relationship as with Bihter, but a romantic, ‘poetic’ love (PC). – Even Firdevs fits into this scheme. She suffers from growing old and frail (AC), but she also wants to have something out of life and on the one hand hopes for Adnan; but when nothing comes of that, she does not give up her hope of being married and therefore tries, desperately and with all possible means, to make herself appear younger than she is (PC). – Finally, Nihal goes through parallel developments. The condition she always wants to escape and is loneliness, she is afraid of life as someone abandoned by everyone, orphaned, loved by nobody (AC). She concentrates her hopes for love and/or compassion, through which alone she can maintain or regain her emotional equilibrium, one after the other and again and again in the same way, first on Adnan, Bülend and the *yah*’s staff, then for a year on Bihter, then on Behlül, and finally on her father again (PC).

Recurring throughout the novel and in all the characters is also the result of the hope of being able to attain happiness or spiritual fulfilment once again. This hope is always revealed to be mere illusion. The actions that were supposed to bring about the realisation of ‘true life’ prove to have been grave mistakes, since they did not improve the situation from which one wanted to escape but rather made it worse (“Resultative” component, RC). And since the hope was usually concentrated on a certain person, a desire for revenge arises in the disappointed, which making things still worse. Not only does it not change the initial state; it rather makes it ever more hopeless. It is also characteristic of the novel’s Actuality and its Resultativity that the author does not hold the actors responsible for what they do. They cannot help it because their actions in a given situation are predetermined by various factors, factors that all can be subsumed under the general heading “Nature”: hereditary factors and character dispositions due to various developments in the past. Although this determinacy often forms part of present

⁹ The tension between two different poles described here was also noted by Finn 1978/84, 189–90: “Bihter is caught between dream [PC] and reality [AC], between her passionate sexual inclinations, in short: the traits inherited from her mother, and her moral consciousness, i.e. the character traits inherited from her father.” Similarly already *ibid.*, 180 and 183.

reality already – very clearly so in the case of Bihter, for example, who is constantly aware of the danger of becoming like her mother, or in the case of Firdevs, in whom Nature takes the form of a constant process of aging – nevertheless, the constraints of Nature initially seem surmountable, and only the attempt to overcome them by acting towards the goals of the Potentiality component makes it clear that this was only a vain hope.

The question of the novel's basic 'message' and the kind of world experience that the author wanted to express in it can therefore be answered as follows:

Man's belief in the possibility of transcending a life that is not a real, fulfilled, and emotionally satisfying life, a life above all without love, makes them recognise their hopes as mere illusions. Their attempts to overcome the inhumanity of life serve in themselves to highlight the cold and inhumane nature of the world wherein the pursuit of happiness is rendered futile from the outset by predetermined natural forces. All the moves made in the hope of being able to transcend the initial condition prove to be counter-productive, they only serve to reinforce the futility of their endeavours.¹⁰

Contrary to the view of some of the interpreters summarised by Moran and also to Finn's reading,¹¹ such a content clearly has no socially critical implications.

10 This interpretation thus complements Sagaster-Jurado's who followed Tanpınar (1988, 292) in assigning a pivotal role to the little slave Beşir and his death in understanding the novel's overarching message. Against the background of our analysis, too, it can be said that Halit Ziya may have placed his central message in this character, in so far as Beşir is possibly intended to make others aware of their lack of freedom: they only *seem* to be free (cf. Sagaster-Jurado 1995, 174–75). In terms of Component Analysis, the Beşir plot just doubles the plots of the other characters: Beşir too longs for another life, a life of love, united with Nihal (PC); but he too is bound to his actual existence as a slave and a castrate (AC); while he seems to have been reasonably content and well-balanced before he fell in love with Nihal, the forces of love and total surrender then lead him into suffering, illness and death (RC). Unlike Beşir, however, the others do not want to admit their impotence in face of Destiny or Nature and still think that something can be changed. The fact, however, that this is a vain illusion and that the determinacy and the actual lack of freedom are so strong *from the outset* that all dreams of happiness must prove to be completely unrealistic, is shown most clearly in Beşir. The same is true for the fact that it is precisely the hopes for a more humane life that make life even more inhumane and heartless: Beşir's infirmity and death make it clear that, in the end, after long suffering, the others too are now completely 'dead'. – The high significance ascribed to the death of the little slave can perhaps also be understood in terms of motif history: In a conspicuously large number of works of the *Edebiyat-ı Cedîde* movement, the tragic main characters die of tuberculosis (which is why the joking term *verem edebiyatı*, "consumption literature", has become a widespread label for the entire production of the group – information from Ms Sagaster-Jurado, thank you!). If such a central motif recurs in the case of the slave Beşir, it is without doubt of some significance.

11 Cf. Finn 1978/84, 176 (referring to Dino 1973, 230): "As Güzin Dino remarks, [the novel] [...] comes with [social] criticism on a broad level."

Aşk-ı Memnu is therefore not an anti-Westernisation novel. From this point of view, it also seems rather daring to interpret man's lack of freedom politically.¹² Nor does the novel – as already demonstrated by Moran, and our analysis confirmed this – offer a moralising perspective on infidelity. Instead, the author refrains from assigning blame to any of the characters,¹³ emphasizing the belief in the lack of human control over destiny; rather, man is seen as in the hands of fate.¹⁴ The novel portrays the inexorable nature of Fate/Destiny, depicted through the deterministic influence of genetic factors and unchangeable character traits. A main motif of the Actuality, and even more so of the Resultative component, is the idea that all human action emerges from natural disposition with almost mathematical necessity and precision.

18.3 The novel's place in literary history

It is well known that Halit Ziya in this novel – and the *Şervet-i Fünûn* movement in general – were inspired by Western authors. Moran cites French authors such as Balzac, Zola, and Flaubert for their influence on the causal dependence of action on character disposition. Regarding Bihter's tragedy, Moran thinks the idea of determination through hereditary factors and its incorporation into the idea of the tragic was inspired by the "Naturalists" (Moran 1983/1990, 78). This remark may help us to make more precise statements about the broader *Zeitgeist* that is speaking from *Aşk-ı Memnu*, by comparing it with European works of the same

12 Determinacy by natural forces can hardly be equated with political oppression, and the longing for a real life, i.e., one filled above all with love, lacks a political dimension, too. By contrast, Sagaster-Jurado would like to attribute to the author "the prophetic vision of the imminent end of the 'slave existence' of Ottoman man under the rule of 'Abdülhamid [...], which was to be fulfilled [...] in 1909" (Sagaster-Jurado 1995, 176-77).

13 For this reason I consider untenable Sagaster-Jurado's reading which assumes that Halit Ziya implicitly wanted to pass a mystically-religiously founded *judgement* (cf. *ibid.*, 176: "'aşk' should be understood here, above all, in the mystical sense of the word, as a striving for perfection. In *'Aşk-ı Memnû'*, the characters fail because they seek a wrong, *merely wordly* love – such an ambition *must* be forbidden because it denies man's imperfection and limitedness vis-à-vis the divine" (italics as in the original German text; my translation, S.G.).

14 This is recognised also by Moran when he says: "The network of the novel's plot(s) is not knitted by the characters, but by configurations created by Fate" – Moran (1983) 1990, 68–69. – See also Sagaster-Jurado 1995, 175–76: "[a] thesis inherent in the novel [is] that man is 'unfree', due to his dependence on the absolute power of Fate which determines his actions" (German: seine absolute Determiniertheit gegenüber einer höheren (göttlichen) Schicksalsmacht).

period. Such statements may then perhaps also shed new light on the entire *Şervet-i Fünûn* movement which previous research used to portray as being completely detached from the world and as not wanting to have anything to do with their environment. Such an accusation can claim some validity insofar as the *Edebiyât-ı Cedîde* group consciously refrained from making political or socially critical statements in their works (as is the case also in *Aşk-ı Memnu*). It is rather unlikely, however, that they should have hovered in a vacuum with their ideas, and this is also evident from Halit Ziya's novel – not only because of the milieu he chose as the setting or because the novel features a character so 'typical' of its time as Behlül.¹⁵ The latter features explain that the novel could be suspected to have been intended as a piece of social criticism. As we have shown, this is not the case. However, the *overall* statement made by the author with his novel could nevertheless well resonate with broader attitudes towards life and the world, aligning with similar sentiments expressed by European authors of the period.

Component Analysis, the method used above to determine the overall message of "Forbidden Love", can help us to achieve this goal as well, as it offers a theoretical framework that extends beyond individual works with their individual idiosyncratic configurations of meaning. Juxtaposing and comparing the components of a larger variety of individual texts written in roughly the same time interval and extracting from them their common denominators, Component Analysis can discern "period"¹⁶ components and, consequently, also PAR structures characterising overarching configurations of meaning prevailing at specific times. In yet another bottom-up step, Component Analysis developed a new type of literary history (or rather history of "meaning", *Sinngeschichte*, in general) by examining in temporal succession the period 'formulas' obtained from individual work analyses. Moreover, Walter Falk and his team did so not only on the basis of *German* literature. During a longer stay in Egypt, he also initiated a re-reading of selected pieces of *Egyptian* literature with the aim of describing Egyptian *Sinngeschichte* with the help of the analytical categories of Component Analysis and compare the Egyptian case to the German one. Surprisingly, the structures of meaning discovered in the course of this project in Egyptian texts seemed to *coincide* temporally with those detected earlier in German literature.¹⁷ Falk therefore suspected that the *Sinngeschichte* he had discovered not only applied to German

¹⁵ Cf., e.g., Finn 1978/84, 194: "Halit Ziya's portrayal sheds light on an entire generation for which Behlül stands as a 'model'."

¹⁶ Falk distinguishes (in descending order of duration) "ages" (*Zeitalter*), "eras" (*Ären*), "periods" (*Perioden*) and "phases" (*Phasen*).

¹⁷ The results of this study are collected in Falk 1984.

and Egyptian literature, but was possibly universal.¹⁸ In a study of my own (Guth 1994), I pursued this suspicion and found it corroborated by a modern Turkish novel. It therefore does not seem unreasonable to ask whether Falk's findings could not perhaps also be used for the epochal localisation of *Aşk-ı Memnu* and a more precise determination of the experience of the meaning of 'the world' that is characteristic of the entire *Şervet-i Fünûn* movement.

Given the timeframe within which Halit Ziya must have composed his novel – probably in the early 1890s¹⁹ – *Aşk-ı Memnu* should align with the period of "Creativism", i.e., exhibit a PAR structure similar to the prevalent configurations of meaning in the German-speaking world from around 1880 to 1920. Condensed in a PAR formula, "Creativism" shows the following structure:

- Actuality – The limitedness of Life, due to its being a life in Time;
- Potentiality – The creativity of the subject, nourished by Nature- and space-related forces;
- Resultativity – The transnatural, exempted from the laws of Time.

(Falk 1984, 34)²⁰

It is evident that the component titles that we have identified for *Aşk-ı Memnu* can not be seen as specifications of this general formula. Nor does "Forbidden Love" correspond to Falk's overall characterisation of the "Creativist" period:

From now on [i.e., from around 1880], the *artist* became the exemplary figure. Artists, we may say, not only register existing reality, like a scholar, but they also seek to transcend it

18 Against Falk, I would prefer to speak of 'global' phenomena, as the findings can be valid only in the context of 'global time', i.e., in regions that are connected by 'worldwide' communication and therefore share a 'global' temporality; see above, Chapter 2.

19 First published as series in *Şervet-i Fünûn* 1897–98.

20 German: "AK: Der durch die Zeitlichkeit bedingte endliche Charakter des Lebens | PK: Die Kreativität des Subjekts, getragen von naturhaft-raumbezogenen Kräften; | RK: Das Transnaturale als das Zeitenthobene". – Falk describes the peculiarity of this period by taking Gerhart Hauptmann's (1862–1946) naturalistic drama *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* (Little Hanne's Ascension, 1893) as his example: "In the past preceding the main plot, little Hanne, an orphan, had sought death in the wintry village pond because she thought she could no longer bear the sadness of Life and, above all, the mistreatment by her mostly drunken stepfather. Moreover, she longed to be reunited with her mother, whom she believed to be in heaven now. When the main plot sets in, we find Hannele rescued from the icy water, but suffering even more from fear of the cruelties of Life, as she is seized by fever and in her fantasy brings up new images of the terrifying. But the ability to produce such images of the soul also proves positive for Hannele. It allows her to create blissful fantasies, images of her mother and of Heaven. In looking at these images, Hannele, while dying, leaves cruel Life behind and beneath her. In the drama, [...] Hannele's frightening environment constitutes the Actuality Component, Hannele's longing the Potentiality, and the images of the afterlife produced by her longing the Resultant" – Falk 1983, 33–34 (my translation, S.G.).

– not, however, like the thinker, by producing new consciousness but by creating new things. [In Creativism], what came to matter most [...] was man's own – and also Nature's – capacity of existence-changing creativity. In contrast to the will to change existence that was now at work in Potentiality, Actuality in its immobility took on the character of the lifelessly fossilised, while images of a new kind of existence emerged in Resultativity.

(Falk 1983, 161)²¹

It is not unusual, however, that authors sometimes lag behind their time, creating works that reflect a worldview already surpassed by many contemporaries. In German literature, Thomas Mann's novella *Der kleine Herr Friedemann* (written around 1896) may serve as an example:

The hero of this story is a man disadvantaged by Life [..., a man] who tries to protect himself against this Life through aestheticism and the adherence to correct formal appearances. At first, he seems to have in fact succeeded. But when there comes an attack on his inner world, and when it comes precisely in the form of (physical) beauty [he falls passionately in love with the beautiful wife of the district commander, who is intent on keeping distances], the futility of his efforts becomes apparent. There is no such thing as a happy life for an outsider. Life turns out to be something from which one has to suffer; it brings about death.

(Heidi Becker, in Falk 1983, 90)

The componential structure of this novella can be summarised in the formula:

[AC] Beautiful but cruel, all-demanding Life

[PC] The attempt [...] to protect oneself [against Life's absolutism] through aestheticism and sticking to form

[RC] The assertion of Life's claim to absoluteness. The destruction of the human being. The unmasking of Life as deadly precisely *in/because of* its beauty

(H. Becker, *ibid.*, 94)²²

21 Original German: "Zur exemplarischen Figur wurde nun der Künstler. Von ihm kann man sagen, daß er die bestehende Wirklichkeit nicht nur, wie ein Gelehrter, registriert, sondern transzendiert, aber nicht, wie der Denker, durch das Hervorbringen neuer Bewußtseinsinhalte, sondern durch das Schaffen neuer Dinge. Maßgeblich wurde (...) [im Kreativismus] die dem Menschen eigene – und auch in der Natur angelegte – Fähigkeit zur existenzverändernden Kreativität. Gegenüber dem jetzt in der Potentialität wirkenden Willen zur Existenzveränderung nahm die Aktualität in ihrer Unbeweglichkeit den Charakter des Lebloos-Versteinerten an, während in der Resultativität Bilder einer neuartigen Existenz hervortraten."

22 Original wording: "[AC] Der Absolutheitsanspruch des schönen, aber grausamen Lebens; [PC] Der Versuch (...), sich durch Form und Ästhetizismus zu schützen; [RC] Die Durchsetzung des Absolutheitsanspruchs. Die Zerstörung des Menschen. Die Demaskierung des Lebens als todbringend gerade in der Schönheit".

On closer examination, such a structure does not – as one might have expected from the novella’s date of origin – reflect a “Creativist” worldview. Rather, it mirrors the way life was experienced in the preceding period of “Reproductionism” (ca. 1820–1880). In “Reproductionism”, the general mood speaking from most authors’ works typically exhibits the following componential structure:

- Actuality – The general and lawful, prevailing in space [The old order of things, experienced as dated and governed by destructive forces of Nature]
 - Potentiality – The particular and unique, tending towards renewal [The subjective will to renewal in the spiritual and human(e)]
 - Resultativity – The individualising reproduction of the general [The new order of things, consisting of the absolute power of the forces of Nature and the destruction of all that is otherwise human. (Formally reinforced Actuality)]
- (Falk 1984, 31)²³

Falk describes this system in more detail:

Since c. 1820, experience showed that the mere knowing of something new [as in the preceding period] would not essentially alter the human condition. Unknown and known elements of the [...] world [now] combined, jointly constituting the Actuality of known and unknown laws of life. This Actuality took priority and interacted with a Potentiality that [...] continued to push towards the formation of material novelty, but in so doing limited itself to the reproduction of Actuality. Therefore, the Resultativity emerging from the interaction of Actuality and Potentiality did not consist of something substantially new but only showed changes in form. [...] [Reproductionism] manifested itself in all arts as a tendency towards “realism”, supplemented sometimes by a tendency towards formal embellishment, in politics as law-abiding restoration or progressivism conforming to the law, in the sciences as positivism.

(Falk 1983, 160–61)²⁴

23 Component titles given in square brackets reflect earlier terminology as in Falk 1983, 206. – Original German wording: “[AC:] Das Allgemeine und Gesetzhafte, herrschend im Raum [Die veraltete Ordnung zerstörerischer Naturkräfte]; [PC:] Das Besondere und Einzigartige, tendierend zur Erneuerung [Der subjektive Wille zur Erneuerung im Geistigen, im Menschlichen]; [RC:] Die individualisierende Reproduktion des Allgemeinen [Neuartige Ordnung der Dinge, bestehend aus der absoluten Macht der Naturkräfte und der Zerstörung alles wesentlich Menschlichen. (Formal gesteigerte Aktualität)]”.

24 German: “Seit etwa 1820 machte sich die Erfahrung geltend, daß die bloße Erkenntnis von Neuem [wie in der vorausgegangenen Periode] die menschliche Situation nicht entscheidend verändere. Das Unbewußte und das Erkannte der (...) Welt traten zusammen und machten nun gemeinsam die Aktualität bekannter und unbekannter Lebensgesetze aus. Diese Aktualität übernahm die Priorität und wirkte ein auf eine Potentialität, die (...) zwar weiter zur Gestaltung dinglicher Neuartigkeiten drängte, aber sich dabei auf die Reproduktion der Aktualität beschränkte,

In *Aşk-ı Memnu*, the cementing of the initial state at the end (RC) aligns with the concept of a formally reinforced Actuality characteristic of a “Reproductionist” Resultativity. The other two components, too, can easily be compared to the corresponding components of the period. The fact that Halit Ziya’s protagonists believe that they are living a ‘dead’ life stems, as we have seen, from the fact that they perceive the prevailing order of things as dated and themselves as subject to the destructive power of the laws of Nature. This is particularly evident in Bihter’s character disposition which she believes to have inherited from her mother. But also Nihal’s suffering from loneliness and her fear of not being loved by anyone ultimately result from the givens of Nature. Afflicted with an illness from childhood (she often suffered epileptic seizures) and then orphaned by the death of her mother – both destructive interventions of Nature, or Fate/Destiny, in her life – her character seems pre-determined from the beginning. Desiring to be loved by others, she tries, again and again, to free herself from her ‘destiny’. But precisely this shows that she is at the mercy of the forces of Nature. In the same vein, Adnan Bey’s desire to marry and change his life can be understood as an expression of suffering from a situation created by the destructive power of Nature (the death of his wife), a situation he seeks to overcome from a certain point on because he thinks enough time has passed now. The characters’ hope that they may be able to overcome the situation described in the Actuality through the loving care of others corresponds to the “Reproductionist” Potentiality of the subject’s strife for renewal in the spiritual, the human(e).

However, what corroborates the thesis that *Aşk-ı Memnu*, too, bespeaks a “Reproductionist” spirit, is not only the novel’s Resultativity component – which clearly exhibits a formally reinforced reproduction of Actuality – and the alignment of its AC and PC with the “Reproductionist” AC and PC, but also the fact that in this novel the initiative that sets action in motion comes from Actuality, i.e., the narrative displays what Falk calls Actuality “priority” – which is always the case in “Reproductionism”. Throughout *Aşk-ı Memnu*, the desire to change the previous life (PC) arises from the realisation that this previous life is not a genuine, real life (AC).

Furthermore, it is obvious that *Aşk-ı Memnu* belongs to a late stage of “Reproductionism”, a phase that Falk calls that of a “concretisation” (cf. *ibid.*, 184–89).

weswegen eine Resultativität entstand, die sich als nur formal, jedoch nicht substantiell neuartig darstellte. (...) [Der “Reproduktionismus”] manifestierte sich in allen Künsten als Tendenz zum “Realismus”, ergänzt bisweilen durch eine Tendenz zu einer formalen Verschönerung, in der Politik als gesetzsgläubige Restauration oder gesetzlichkeitskonformer Progressismus, in den Wissenschaften als Positivismus.”

In the case of Reproductionism, he has titled this concretisation stage “Reflexism”. At the stage of Reflexism, the component titles of Reproductionism can be specified as

- AC What destroys the heart
- PC What bears/supports the heart
- RC What has no heart, is heartless

(Heidi Becker, in Falk 1983, 208–9)²⁵

In terms of content, this applies even more clearly to the situation expressed in *Aşk-ı Memnu*. For in this novel, too, the “peculiarity of the experience of the world [...] seems to lie in the fact that ‘the essence of humanity is perceived as reduced to the feeling suffering heart’. All other forces in the world may prove to be inhumane” (Becker, *ibid.*, 208).²⁶ In Actuality, Halit Ziya, too, describes forces “that have a destructive effect on the human heart”, in Potentiality those that “carry the feeling and suffering heart”, and in Resultativity, “the forces that kept the heart beating have ceased to exist” (*ibid.*, 209).²⁷

Our analysis thus confirms that *Aşk-ı Memnu*, too, is a representation of the worldview of “Reproductionism” in its final, concretisation phase. The fact that Halit Ziya was influenced in this work by European Realism and the ideas of Naturalism becomes all the more plausible after this attribution, as in Europe, the experience of life in the era of “Reproductionism” often manifested itself – as Falk points out – “in all arts as a tendency towards ‘realism’”.²⁸ Furthermore, the abstention from politics and social criticism in Halit Ziya’s novel and the wider *Şervet-i Fünûn* movement becomes understandable now not only as motivated by an alleged necessity of circumventing Abdülhamit’s censorship, but also as a much more general, less Turkey-specific phenomenon: During the last phase of “Reproductionism”, people – in the Ottoman Empire just as in the German-speaking world – were primarily concerned, obviously, with the “feeling, suffering heart”, i.e., with the effects of certain external circumstances on the human being’s emotional condition. The detailed portrayal of each character’s psychology and Halit Ziya’s use of internal perspective in the narrative style are consistent with this emphasis.

²⁵ German: “AC: Das Herz-Zerstörende | PC: Das Herz-Tragende | RC: Das Herz-Lose”.

²⁶ The quotation within the quotation is from Walter Falk, *Der kollektive Traum vom Krieg: Epochenale Strukturen der deutschen Literatur zwischen ‚Naturalismus‘ und ‚Expressionismus‘* (Heidelberg 1977), 71, 72.

²⁷ Quotation within quotation from Falk 1977 (see preceding fn.), 74.

²⁸ Cf. above, p. 411, with note 24.

However, the alignment of “Forbidden Love” with “Reproductionism” does not necessarily mean that *all* works of the *Şervet-i Fünûn* movement fall into the concretisation phase of “Reproductionism”. By the time indicated (among others) by Akyüz (1964, 509) as the group’s major ‘life span’ – from 1896 to 1901 – , most authors in Europe had already embraced a “Creativist” attitude towards the world, and it is well possible that some of the movement’s authors had done so, too. It would therefore be necessary to find out, with the help of Component Analysis, whether the majority of the *Edebiyât-ı Cedîde* writers had not already overcome the pessimistic worldview of “Reproductionism” and become convinced that their environment, perceived as lifeless and petrified, could be transcended by the transformative potential of Creativity towards a better world, a world of the Spiritual and Eternal. There is much to be said in favour of this assumption...²⁹

²⁹ It is quite interesting in this context that in this phase of “Creativsim”, as Falk remarks, the *artist* became a typical, “exemplary figure” (cf. quotation on p. 409, above). It is thus probably not by mere chance that Halit Ziya’s *Mai ve Siyah*, a novel revolving around the life of a *writer*, is generally regarded as the *Şervet-i Fünûn* group’s literary manifesto.

19 Early national literature in Turkey

Some authors and their novels

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This chapter may serve as a reservoir of brief encyclopedic references, for quick, summary comparison of life-trajectories of some prominent Ottoman-Turkish authors and key texts from the period(s) in question with the Arab(ic) cases discussed earlier in the present book. The short biographies of Nâmiğ Kemâl, Hâlîde Edib (Adıvar), Refiğ Hâlid (Karay), and Reşâd Nûrî (Güntekin) should be sufficient to highlight the major traits that these protagonists of the Ottoman-Turkish ‘*nahḍa*’ have in common with their Arab counterparts: Born into rather well-off families, they received a mostly ‘modern’, secular education in the urban capital, then often worked as civil servants or in the army (sometimes in the provinces), to then typically give up that kind of ‘dependent’ occupations and turn to writing, generally as journalists, some also as translators, but all as creators of patriotic fiction and/or drama. Like their Arab colleagues, they felt that they were called to contribute to the progress of their societies, helping them as critical analysts providing thoughtful insight, as ‘doctors’ diagnosing their diseases, ‘teachers’ supplying useful knowledge, ‘engineers’ repairing rotten or broken structures, and as moralists being able to separate right from wrong and good from bad. With these aims in mind, they enthusiastically sought to assert themselves as public intellectuals and creative writers in the press and on the book market, often opposing official doctrines and questioning those in power, a critical stance that not a few of them had to pay with longtime banishment and exile.

Originally published as entries in a multi-volume German encyclopædia of world literature, each single work-essay first sketches the general frame and some background, then gives a concise plot summary of the work in question, to conclude with an overview of how it was received at the time of its publication and its overall relevance in literary history. All of the works presented here were highly influential at their time, evidently because they managed to capture the spirit of the respective period. With the exception of Refiğ Hâlid (Karay)’s rather descriptive-analytical than dramatic stories – which, however, nevertheless became very popular because they met the high demand for local colour and simple language – all other works additionally make ample use of sentimental, often

quite lachrymose dramatisation, supplementing their authors' critical stance with engaging passion and emotional commitment, aspects we by now are familiar with from the works of many Arab authors discussed in preceding chapters and thus yet another proof of the fact that Nahḍawī and later early nationalist subjectivity asserted itself to an essential extent *emotionally* and that the dramatic plots of fictional texts played a pivotal role in the embodiment of emerging/emerged subjectivity and early patriotic nationalism.

* * *

19.1 Nâmiķ Kemāl, *Vaṭan yāḥūd Silistre*

19.1.1 The author

born December 21, 1840, in Tekirdağ (Turkey)
died December 2, 1888, on Chios (Greece)

(i.e., Meḥmed Kemāl) – Received his education mainly from private tutors; learned Arabic, French and Persian; 1865 co-founder of the Young Ottoman opposition, who made journalism a major tool for forming public opinion in Turkey; when the group was dissolved, the author fled to Europe (Paris, London), where he stayed from 1867 to 1870, publishing the newspaper *Ḥürriyet* (Freedom); on his return to Turkey, Kemāl founded the newspaper *İbret* (The Admonishing Example); 1873 premiere of his play *Vaṭan yāḥūd Silistre*, which resulted in his being sent to exile in Famagusta/Cyprus (1873–1876); 1877 further imprisonment and banishment to Lesbos; from 1879 on, Vice Governor of Lesbos, Rhodes (1884–1887), then Chios.

19.1.2 *Vaṭan yāḥūd Silistre* (“Fatherland or Silistria”)

The theme of the four-act play, published in 1873 and premiered in İstanbul that same year, is patriotism. Nâmiķ Kemāl found the material for the plot in historical events from two wars, which are here combined into one: the Russian-Turkish War of 1829 and the Crimean War (1853–1856), in which the Silistria fortress, besieged by the Russians and successfully defended by the Turks, played an important role.

The initial scenes are set in Manastir, an Ottoman city on the Balkans (today Bitolj), before the scene moves to Silistria on the Danube. The main characters are İslâm Beğ, commander of the volunteers from Manastir; İslâm's fiancée Zekîye; her father Şıdķi Beğ, deputy commander of the Silistria Fortress; and the (historical) figure of the corporal 'Abdullâh Çavuş, a patriotic 'son of the people'. In order to be allowed to fight at the head of his volunteers in Silistria, the patriot İslâm Beğ has abandoned everything, even his fiancée. Zekîye's father was reported missing in another war years ago, her mother and brother died of tuberculosis (an almost inevitable ingredient in contemporary literature that appeals to 'compassion'). When İslâm Beğ leaves the city cheering on his people: "If you love your homeland, follow me!", Zekîye joins the troops (disguised as a man). At the front she mainly takes care of the wounded, but also participates in the demolition of an enemy ammunition dump. Colonel Şıdķi Beğ, who is heading the defense since the death of the commanding pasha, becomes aware of the young soldier without knowing anything of his/her true identity: Zekîye is his own daughter. Only in the last act, when the siege is over and the defeated Russians withdraw, does everything come to light, and Şıdķi Beğ marries Zekîye to İslâm Beğ, whom he has come to appreciate and love.

As the rather simple fable already shows, the play lacks essential elements of drama, a shortcoming the author himself was well aware of. Human conflicts do not play a role, the characters remain pale and 'fleshless'. In the age of psychological naturalism, Zekîye's disguise, more an element of the *commedia dell'arte*, appears rather anachronistic.

Yet, with his first piece for the stage, the author achieved exactly what he had recognized already during his previous stay in Europe as the task and potential of theatre: not mere entertainment, but to function as "a school of language and morals". *Vaţan yâhûd Silistre* is a piece of ideas or theses based on a new interpretation of the term *vaţan*. The word, which until then had referred, in common usage, merely to one's closer home, i.e., the place where one was born and raised, was now endowed with the wider meaning of a more general "fatherland".¹ In order to make his intention unmistakably clear to both the common people and the intellectuals, Nâmık Kemâl, ten days before the premiere, published a famous article entitled "Vaţan" in *İbret* (The Admonishing Example), of which he was editor-in-chief. Within less than a week after the premiere of *Vaţan yâhûd Silistre*, it was clear that the piece was an unprecedented success – a fact that prompted the Sultan to banish Nâmık Kemâl to the Famagusta fortress in Cyprus. The

¹ [Cf. above, Chapter 5, on the Egyptian sheikh al-Marşafî's essay on the "Eight Key Concepts" of his time, among which also *vaţan*.]

drama's triumph could not be stopped, though, by such a measure. During the author's three-year ban, it was performed almost six hundred times in İstanbul, İzmir and Saloniki.

Thus, it is not for its – rather limited – literary quality that Nâmîk Kemâl's play deserves attention, but for the fact that it captured the historical moment when the nation, paralyzed by Sultan 'Abdülhamîd's despotic regime with its complex espionage network, was waiting for a catchphrase that would articulate its need for brotherly solidarity. As such, the play can serve as an example of the potential of theatre and one of the most significant stages in the history of Turkish drama.

Ref.: S.K. Karaalioğlu, "Vaṭan yâḥûd Silistre", in id., *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, ii (1982): 288–95. – M. Kaplan, "Vaṭan yâḥûd Silistre", in id., *Tip tahlilleri: Türk edebiyatında tipler*, 1985: 186–94. – J. Stewart-Robinson, "N.K. and his 'Vatan'", in *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, 13/1 (1989): 48–50.

19.2 Hâlîde Edîb (Adıvar), *Yeñi Tūrān*

19.2.1 The author

born 1882 İstanbul (Turkey)

died January 9, 1964 İstanbul (Turkey)

(also: Hâlîde Şâlih) – was the first Muslim Turkish girl to attend the American Girls' College in Üsküdar / İstanbul (until 1901); from 1908 on, she wrote literary and political articles in various Turkish newspapers and magazines; strongly advocated the education of Turkish women and took an active part in the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1922); between 1925 and 1939 abroad for political reasons; 1940–1950 professor of English literature at İstanbul University; 1950–1954 member of the Democrat Party.

19.2.2 *Yeñi Tūrān* ("The New Turan")

Serialized in 1912 in the magazine *Ṭanîn*, and in 1913 published as a book, *Yeñi Tūrān* stems from the author's early period. Unlike the still earlier *Handan*, however, the novel owes its fame not to the nuanced and sensitive depiction of the

character of the female main character, but to the ardent pathos with which Halide Edip here gave artistic expression to a contemporary utopian ideology, exemplarily embodied in the “enthusiastic political reformer” Oğuz and his lover Kaya, a woman of “tart genius” (O. Hachtmann).

The plot, set in the novel’s near future (1928), stages all “the arguments that were common in national discourse” “through vivid fictional configurations” (E. Glassen) by combining a love story – according to the author a “mandatory ingredient”, owed to contemporary taste – with the portrayal of the controversy between two political groups: “New Turanians” (Oğuz and Kaya) on the one side, and “Young Ottomans” on the other. In the latter, we can recognize the liberalists of the *Hürriyet ve İtilâf* party, who had succeeded, in 1912, in the atmosphere of crisis prevailing in the Ottoman Empire at the time, to challenge the Young Turks of the Committee of Union and Progress (İTC), who had seized power in 1908. Basically a supporter of the İTC, but disappointed with its real politics and above all its inability to give new ideological orientation in a time of painful upheaval, the author outlines the ideal of a united Ottoman-Turkish federal state, a “Commonwealth of mutual love and common prosperity” (E. Glassen).² The author imagined this state as still ruled by a caliph and being able to integrate the many ethnic and religious communities of the late Ottoman Empire into the state as a whole. Due to its backwardness, caused by the Ottoman rule, the Turkish part of the population should initially receive special rights in, and support from, the new state in order to be able to catch up with the more advanced groups – a construction that in modern intellectual history can clearly be located at the point of transition between the old Empire-oriented and the new national-Turkish thinking. The political program, which, in addition to partial autonomy and decentralisation, is characterised by the promotion of agriculture, education, an enlightened, moderate, tolerant religion, and the call for women’s emancipation, with simultaneous emphasis on the old Turkish tradition, outweighs the otherwise sparse basic plot. The inclusion in a story of conscious renunciation of love in favour of political activism is extremely important for the emotional structure and the success of the work, since it is precisely this conscious renunciation that “creates that field of mysterious tension from which strength can be drawn” (E. Glassen). From a narrative point of view, the perspective is also very cleverly chosen: the events are portrayed by a young man who actually belongs to the opposing party, but who involuntarily admires the actions of the “noble enthusiasts” of New Turan and, above all, of the “demonically compelling” figure of Kaya (O. Hachtmann).

2 [Cf. the role of love in Güntekin’s *Çalıkuşu*, see Chapter 15, above.]

In *Yeñi Tūrān*, Halide Edip elaborated in a novel on what she also championed as a speaker in the “Turkish Homes” (*Türk Ocakları*), those debating clubs and meeting places that were intended as the nucleus of a new social order and cultural reorientation (in the novel, they find their equivalent in the *Yeni Turan Yurdu*, the “New Turan Home”). In the *Türk Ocakları*, the author used to interact with charismatic pioneers of Turkish nationalist thinking, such as Ziya Gökalp and Yusuf Akçura, who probably also provided role models for the Oğuz figure.

Ref.: O. Hachtmann, *Die türkische Literatur des 20. Jh.s* (1916), 40–42. – O. Spies, *Die türkische Prosaliteratur der Gegenwart* (1943), 38. – F. İz, “Khâlîde Edib”, in *EL²*. – E. Glassen, “Nationale Utopien von H.E., Müfide Ferid und Yakub Kadri”, in *İstanbul Almanach*, 4 (2000): 44–56.

19.3 Refik Hâlid (Karay), *Memleket Hikâyeleri* and *İstanbul'un İçyüzü*

19.3.1 The author

born March 14, 1888 İstanbul (Turkey)

died July 18, 1965 İstanbul (Turkey)

(alias Kirpi) – Son of a high tax officer; 1900–1906 Galatasaray High School; then finance officer, alongside law studies; 1908 (Young Turk Revolution) quits job and gives up studies to work as translator and journalist; 1909 joins the *Fecr-i Âtî* group; from 1910 onwards satires, often under the pseudonym Kirpi (“the hedgehog”); 1913 exiled to Sinop (later also to Çorum, Ankara, and Bilecik) because of criticism of the Young Turk regime (Union and Progress Party, İTF); formative years in the Anatolian province; 1918 return to İstanbul, political activity as member of the Liberal Unionists, various satires; 1922 escape (together with his family) after being threatened with arrest because of criticism of the leader of the national resistance, Mustafa Kemal; 15 years of exile (first Lebanon, later Aleppo), material hardship, isolation; after a general amnesty in 1938 return to Turkey as a broken man; resumes writing, but apolitical (now mainly novels).

19.3.2 *Memleket Hikâyeleri* (“Stories from the Homeland”)

The realistic-satirical stories “from the homeland” were in part pre-published in a magazine in 1918 before a first book edition came out in 1919 and a second, expanded edition in 1939. The stories brought Refik Halit Karay his literary breakthrough. In them, the author, originally an urban intellectual, processed the formative experience he had in the Anatolian province where he was banned from 1913 to 1918 because of his comments critical of the Young Turk regime. The fact that most of the stories are set in the villages and towns of the hinterland of Asia Minor was still largely a novelty in Turkish literature at the time, but especially appreciated in a period when the old Ottoman Empire was collapsing and Turkish nationalism emerging as the ideology of the future.

Keeping with the *millî edebiyât* (“national literature”) movement’s slogan *Halka doğru!* (“Towards the people!”), the language of the narratives is of a clarity and almost folkloristic simplicity that consciously breaks with the previous aesthetic ideal, the highly rhetoricised Ottoman language of the elite of the ancien régime. The more natural, spontaneous, colloquial Turkish established Karay’s reputation as the “best author writing in İstanbul Turkish”, a reputation Karay was proud of all his life long and that distinguished him from other contemporary innovators of Turkish literary language, especially the authors of the rather elitist *Edebîyât-ı Cedîde* movement, which was committed to the principle of *l’art pour l’art* (cf. e.g. Hâlid Ziyâ Uşaklıgil).³

Themes, characters and settings of the *Memleket Hikâyeleri* are as ‘close to the people’ as is their language. With peasants, petty religious scholars, provincial officials, rascals, ‘fallen’ women, and sometimes workers, Karay makes ‘typical’ characters of the middle and lower classes his protagonists, colouring the settings, especially the rural and provincial urban lifeworlds, with the local colour that is so important to the concept of “national literature”,⁴ addressing also the ‘diseases’ from which the Turkish nation has to be cured if it wants to keep up with the global standards of civilisation: the leaning, widespread among civil servants, towards routine and a comfortable, easy life; their corruptibility; the incomprehensible, difficult language of the educated elite which makes it impossible to raise the uneducated masses to a higher level of civilisation; the way in which the authorities and society deal with marginalized groups; the strict code

³ [Cf. above, Chapter 18, on Uşaklıgil’s novel *Aşk-ı Memnû* (“Forbidden Love”).]

⁴ [Cf. İsa ‘Ubayd’s programmatic foreword to *İhsân Hânım*, from 1921, translated into English in Chapter 12, above.]

of honour and shame and the quickly outlawing rumor mill; the hypocrisy of religious dignitaries; the widespread superstitious beliefs, etc.

As in contemporary Arabic or Persian literature (cf. for example the Taymür brothers⁵ or Muḥammad-ʿAlī Jamālzāde), in Karay's stories, too, an author is speaking who sees himself as the 'doctor' of his society. However, Karay, although clearly writing in the tradition of the of thinkers of nineteenth-century Enlightenment, no longer raises his index finger to warn from moral decay. The new artistic ideal is satisfied with confidently and amusedly holding a mirror in front of the readership in which they will recognize, with a smile, themselves and the evils of their own society – a basic requirement for society to 'be cured'. Contemporaries received Karay's literature in this spirit, that is, as realistic, almost photographic snapshots of Turkish life, which is why it can also be considered, and used as, an invaluable document of everyday life in Anatolia before the First World War.

Transl.: (English:) *Stories of Exile (Gurbet Hikâyeleri)*, K. Dejnica, N Kahraman (2009). – "The Peach Orchards" (*Şeftali bahçeleri*), N. Gamm, in: İz, ed. 1978, 78–86. – "The Gray Donkey" (*Boz eşek*), R. P. Finn, in *Tablet & Pen : Literary landscapes from the modern Middle East*, ed. R. Aslan (2011), 67–73. | (German:) „Die Pfirsichgärten“ (*Şeftali bahçeleri*), A. Schmidt, in: *Der neue Orient*, 9/3-4 (1921): 63–66. – „Nachbarsehre“; „Der Zweifel des Herrn Vehbi“, in: *Das Blutgeld und andere türkische Novellen*, ed. O. Spies (1942). – „Der graue Esel“; „Gelber Honig“; „Das Heiligengrab“, O. Spies, in: *Das Geisterhaus. Türkische und ägyptische Novellen*, ed. H. J. Kissling / A. Schimmel (1949), 93–124. – **Ref.:** O. Spies, *Die türkische Prosaliteratur der Gegenwart* (1943), 26–33. – C. Kudret, *Türk Edebiyatında Hikâye ve Roman*, ii (1987), 190–93. – B. Caner, *Türkische Literatur* (1998), 180–87.

19.3.3 *İstanbul'un İç Yüzü* ("İstanbul seen from Inside")

Karay's only novel dates from before the Second World War and was published in 1920, still with Arabic typeface. A new edition with Latin characters, now titled *İstanbul'un Bir Yüzü* (A Face/One Side of İstanbul), came out in 1939. The text consists mainly of a series of portraits that are only loosely held together by a rudimentary plot. In the frame story, a woman of lower origin named 'İşmet, who grew up in the city palace (*konak*) of a pasha during the reign of Sultan 'Abdülhamid, meets her childhood friend, Kānī, again around 1916. He organizes a spontaneous party for her in his *apartment* in the newer İstanbul district of Şişli.

5 [For a literary biography of one of them, Maḥmūd Taymür, cf. above, Chapter 13.]

At this party, 'İşmet has the opportunity to meet a group of men from the contemporary İstanbul *société* that the author with all likelihood thought to be representative of the society of his time. During a visit to Kānī's summer villa (*köşk*) on one of the islands off İstanbul, a similar type of meeting is repeated with a society of women.

The rudimentary plot ends with the departure of Kānī and his family to Germany. The core of the work is formed by the detailed characterisations of 'typical' representatives of the İstanbul upper class in the upheaval final phase of the Ottoman Empire, in which the Committee for Union and Progress (İTC), who had seized power in 1908, sought to quickly replace the Ottoman upper class with a Turkish bourgeoisie. But in the turmoil of the First World War, speculators, black marketeers and fraudsters appeared alongside the old elite or replaced them. Former clergymen, gendarmerie officers or debt collection officers now became real estate agents or smugglers, and members of the lower classes, too, could make a career. The first chapter of the novel, entitled "Bir Harb Zengini" (A War Winner), is dedicated to such a *nouveau riche* parvenu – one of Kānī's childhood friends himself. It leads on to a somewhat nostalgic, but not uncritical, look back at "The people of the old days" ("Eski Devirdekiler", chapter 2), which includes people from the manorial *konak* (where 'İşmet and Kānī spent their childhood) and is therefore dedicated to a part of the old upper class. In three subsequent chapters – *Yeñi Devir Sîmâları* ("Faces of the New Era"), *Eski Devir Sîmâları* ("Faces of the Old Times"), and *Harb Devriniñ Hânımları* ("The Ladies of War Time") – the picture expands into a comprehensive panorama of society, probably intended by the author as a settlement with the Young Turks, who had banished him to Anatolian exile five years earlier.

To underline authenticity, the novel is written in the form of a diary. Significantly, its author 'İşmet sees herself – like the author – as a "historian" (*vak'ânîwîs*), who records everything "as it was", "without changing the slightest detail [...] or adding anything from my imagination." Indeed, the work is also invaluable as a socio-historical document.

Ref.: C. Kudret, *Türk Edebiyatında Hikâye ve Roman*, ii (1987), 208–209. – B. Caner, *Türkische Literatur* (1998), 187–200. – TBEA, ii (2nd edn, 2003), s.v.

19.4 Reşād Nūrī (Güntekin), *Çalıkuşu*

19.4.1 The author

born November 25, 1889 İstanbul (Turkey)

died December 7, 1956 London (Great Britain)

(also: Reşād Nūrī) – Son of a military doctor and the daughter of a provincial governor; Galatasaray high school, later monastery school in Smyrna (İzmir); 1912 degree in Humanities at İstanbul University (Darülfünun); from 1913 teacher in Bursa, later in İstanbul (French, Turkish literature, philosophy); 1918/19 theatre critic, later literary studies, first prose writings as well as theatre adaptations of French plays; 1922 breakthrough with *Çalıkuşu*; in addition to numerous public offices (1927–1939 and 1947–1950 inspector of the Dept. of Education, 1929–1931 member of the Language Committee, 1939–1946 member of parliament for the Republican People's Party, CHP, 1950 representative of Turkey at UNESCO), author of over 100 works, including 19 novels and 7 collections of short stories, numerous (but little noticed) plays, Anatolian sketches; translations from world literature; many works turned into films.

Collected works: *R.N.G külliyatından* (selected works, 1965). -- **Transl.:** (English:) *The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl (Çalıkuşu)*, anon. (1949) | (German:) *Zaunkönig : der Roman eines türkischen Mädchens (Çalıkuşu)*, anon. (1942). – **Ref.:** (monographies:) E. Birol, *R.N.G.'in romanlarında şahıslar dünyası* (1984). – E. Birol, *R.N.G.* (1989). – N. Taydaş, *R.N.G.'in oyun yazarlığı* (2000). – M. F. Kanter, *Ölümünün 50. Yılında belgelerle R.N.G.* (2006). – (articles:) T. Poyraz and M. Alpbek “R.N.G.'in hayatı ve eserleri”, *Türk kütüphaneciliği* 6.3 (1957), 1–18. – F. Nametak, “Tursko društvo u ranim romanima Reşada Nurija Güntekina” (Turkish society in the early novels of R.N.G.), *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju*, 25 (1975), 301–35. – M. Durmuş, “Evidences of French literature in the novels of R.N.G.”, *Journal of Turkish Studies* 4 (2009), 561–90. – B. Akkuş, “The modernization problem in R.N.G.'s *Eski Hastalık* (Old Sickness) novel”, *International Journal of Turcologia*, 8.16 (2013), 121–42. – S. Akça and M. Akbulut, “A content-based social network analysis of R.N.G.'s letters”, *Bilgi Dünyası: Information World*, 18.1 (2017), 143–47. – A. Pulat, “R.N.G.'in *Gökyüzü* romanında ironik anlatım”, *Social Sciences Studies Journal*, 4.25 (2018), 5286–90. – E. Dervişoğlu, “R.N.G.'in bir uzun öyküsü: *Salgın*”, *Göç dergisi*, 7.2 (2020), 229–43. – T. Maraucci, “Un'allegoria epidemica della nazione: *Salgın* di R.N.G.”, *LEA – Lingue e Letterature d'Oriente e d'Occidente*, 10 (2021), 97–115. – Y. Alper, “İstibdâdî idârenin gizli enstrümanlarından hafiyelik ve jurnalın R.N.G.'in romanlarına yansımaları”, *Türkiyat mecmuası / Journal of Turkology* 31.2 (2021), 649–80. – Y. Alper, “R.N.G.'in romanlarında ritüeli *Sapere aude!* aforizmasıyla okumak”, *Erdem*, 81 (2021), 1–22. – Y. Okay, “As a thesis novel example: *Green Night* (Yeşil Gece)”, *International Journal of Turcologia*, 17.33 (2022), 56–60.

19.4.2 *Çalıkuşu* (“The Wren”)

First published as a series in *Vakit* in 1922, *Çalıkuşu* helped the author to achieve his great breakthrough. In the early years of the Turkish Republic, the novel advanced to become a kind of ‘handbook’ for the youth.

Feride, the only daughter of a respected family, is brought up in a French school, where she is called “the Wren” because of her cheerful, free-leaning, freedom-loving nature. Orphaned at an early age and taken in by her aunt, the young woman falls in love with her cousin, Kâmuran. The two get engaged. Immediately before the wedding, however, she discovers a love letter from Kâmuran to another woman. That same night she flees, trying her luck as a teacher in Anatolia.

The second part of the novel consists of the diary Feride keeps there over the next five years. In it, she mainly reports on the miserable social conditions in the countryside and the backward mentality of the villagers due to a lack of education, as well as problems with the bureaucracy. Because of her great beauty, marriage proposals are repeatedly made to her. Although she refuses all of these (because she cannot forget Kâmuran, despite his treason), the fact that many are courting her soon leads to reputational rumors that force her to move on. When the War of Liberation breaks out, her school is converted into a hospital, and Feride stays as a nurse with an elderly military doctor whom she knows from before. When he dies, he leaves her his fortune. And he has also arranged for a reconciliation between Feride and Kâmuran. Just like Feride still loves her cousin, the latter, now widowed, still loves her, and both begin a new life as a couple, enriched by many experiences.

It was exactly for the novel’s mixture of sentimentality and realism that *Çalıkuşu* was able to give new courage to an entire generation. It exemplified central conflicts of the era and at the same time offered solutions: the tension between individual and society, intellectuals and the people, mundane modernity and rural tradition, between city (old cosmopolitan capital of the dissolving Ottoman Empire) and countryside (the Anatolian hinterland that was so important for the new Republic as the seat of ‘genuine’ Turkishness), between ideal and reality of a ‘Turkish nation’, between the newly strengthened bourgeois self-confidence with its tendency towards sentimental self-affirmation and the general feeling of inferiority evoked by the collapse of the Empire and the need to face the facts realistically, not the least because of the War of Liberation. In the cultivated, sensitive, chaste and loyal Feride who has to suffer a lot as she is forced to cope with the most adverse living conditions, yet successfully preserves her cheerful “wren” nature, the novel offered the readership of the emerging new Turkey a broad variety of opportunities for identification.

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¹ Much of the reference literature that mentions this article says the source is *al-Ahrām*, not *al-Waqā‘i‘ al-miṣriyya*. I have not seen the very original but only its reprint in M. R. Riḍā’s edition. There, however, the article is reproduced in ch. 3, which is subtitled “*Maqālātuḥu al-iṣlāḥiyya fī jarīdat al-Waqā‘i‘ al-miṣriyya al-rasmiyya*”.

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